Sight and Sound Sound

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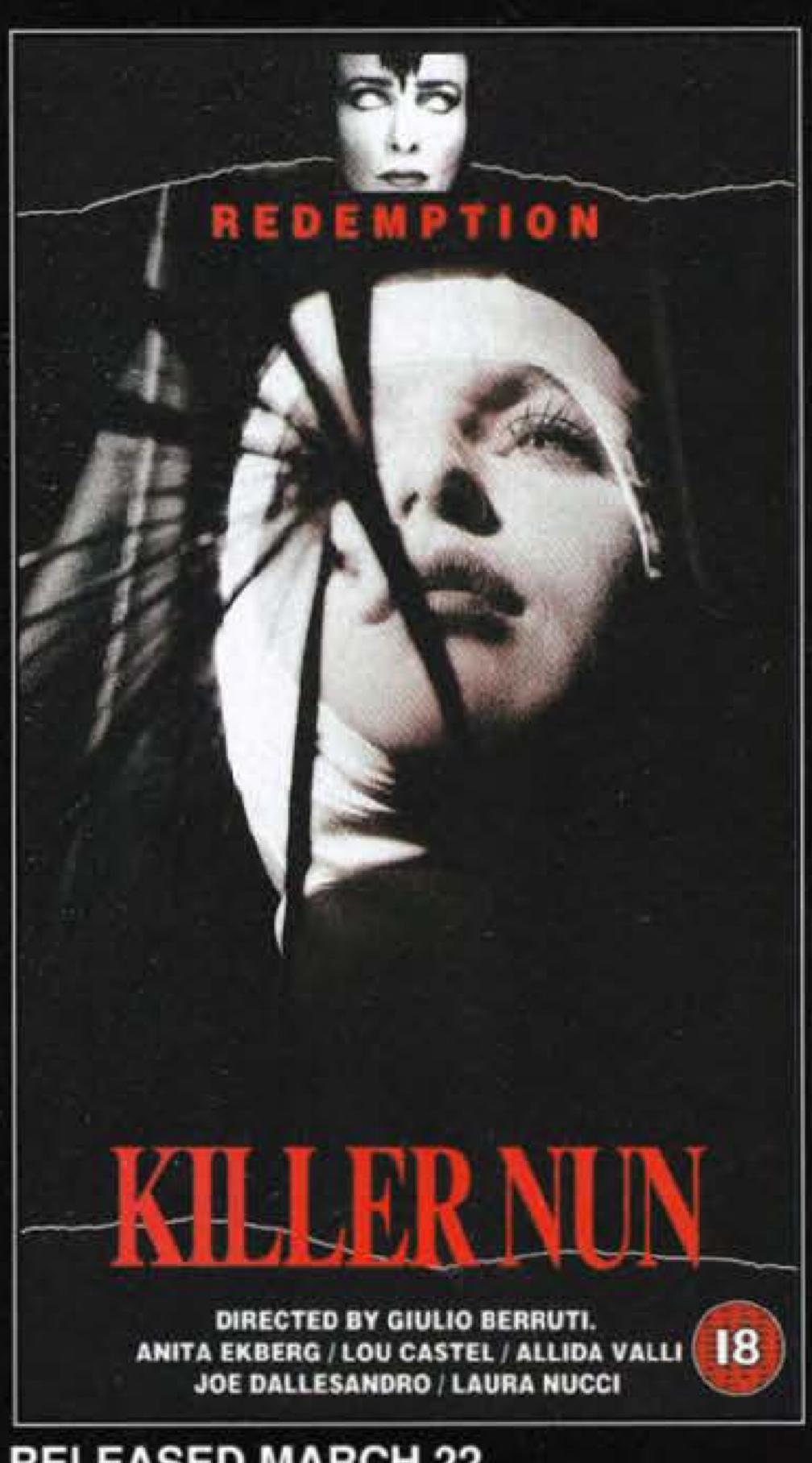


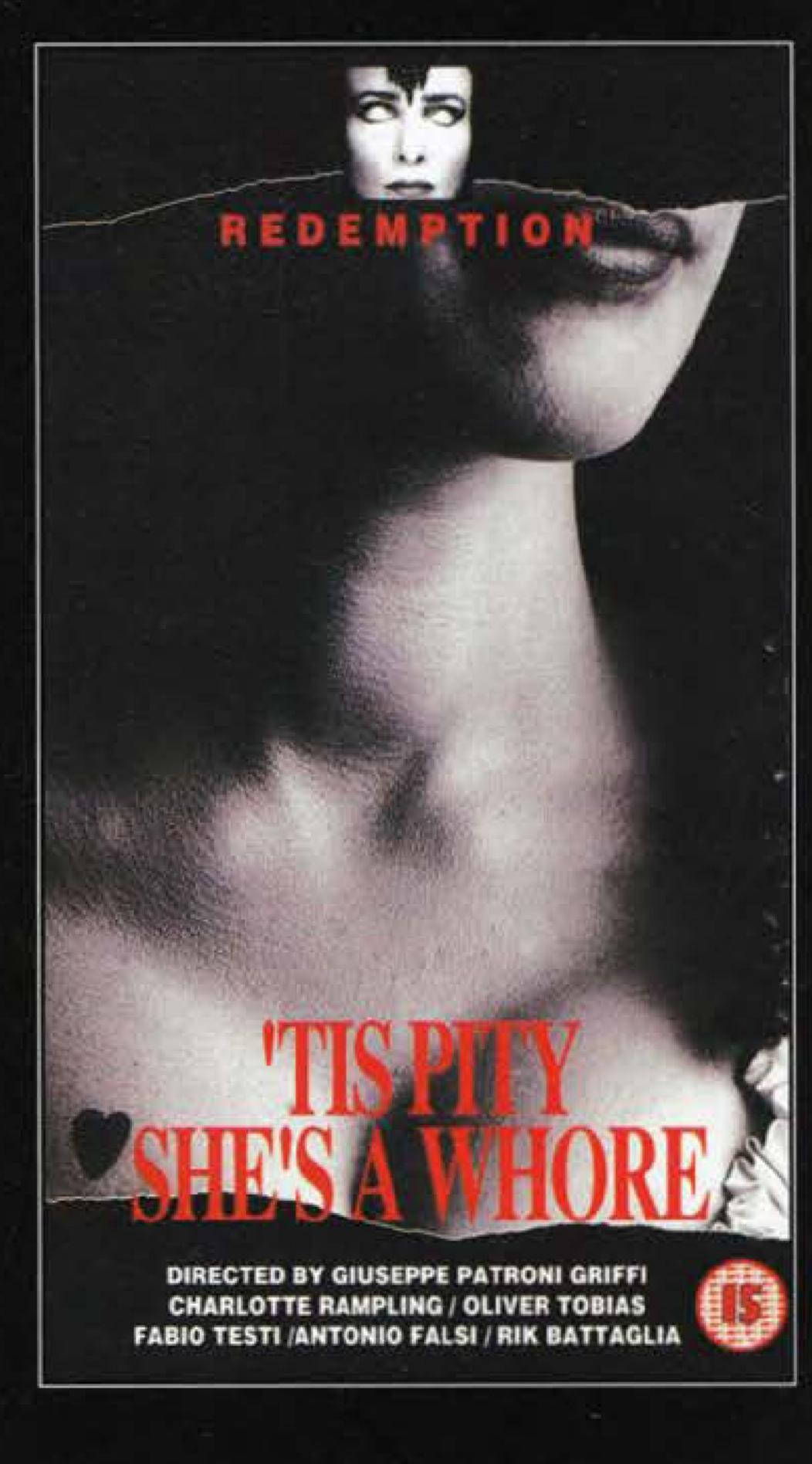


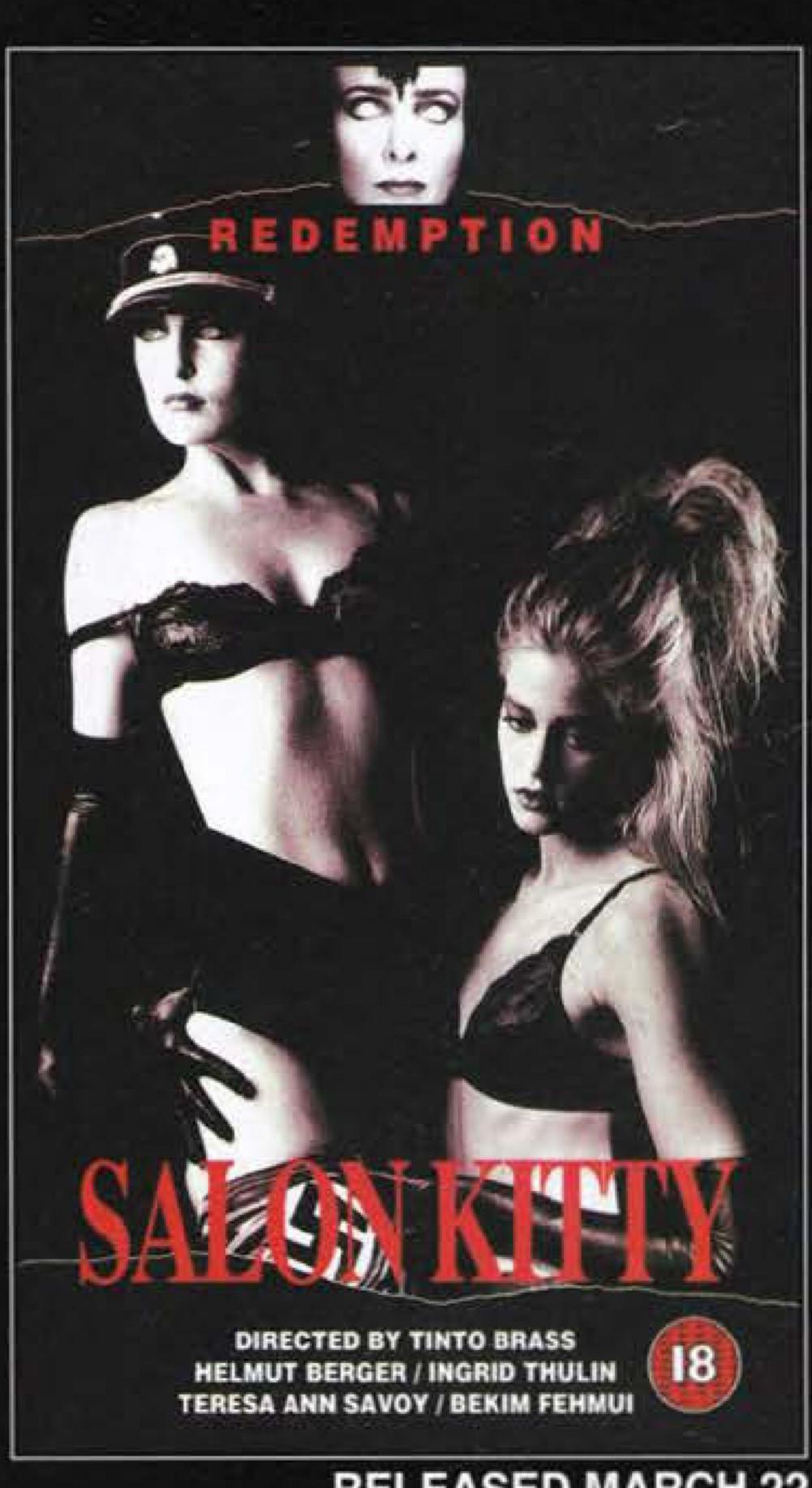


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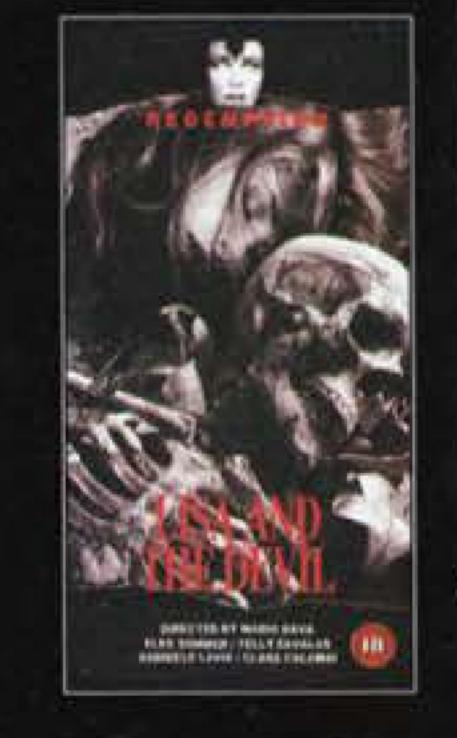




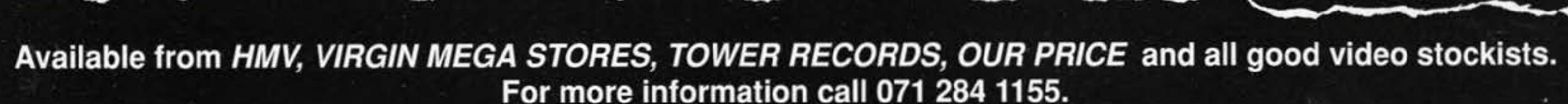
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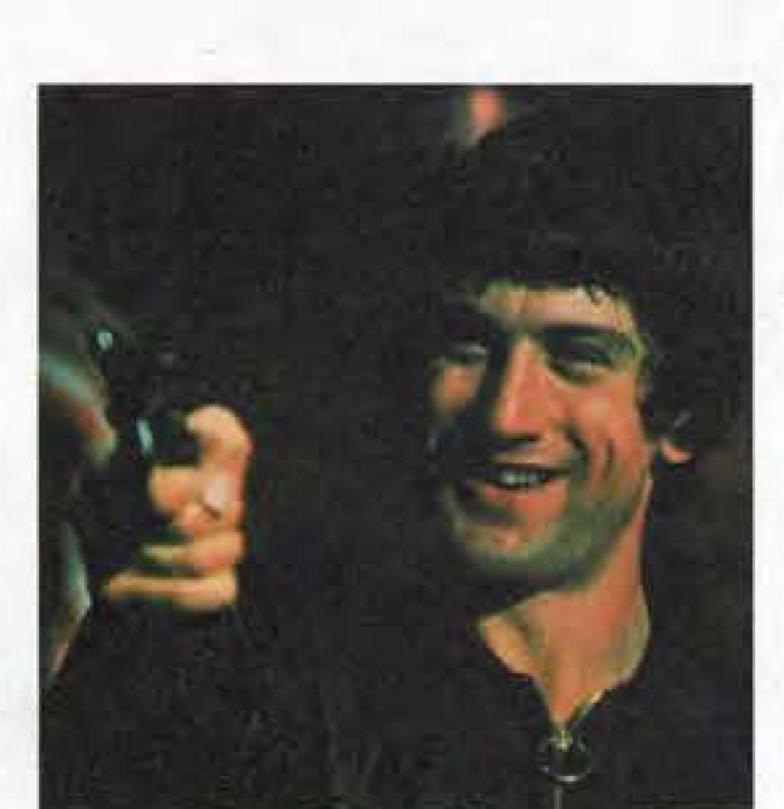
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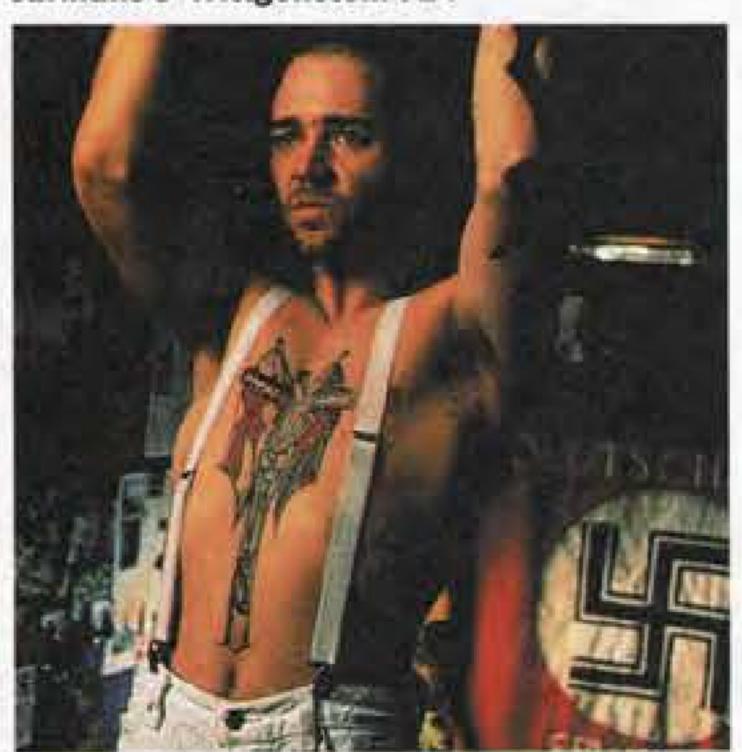
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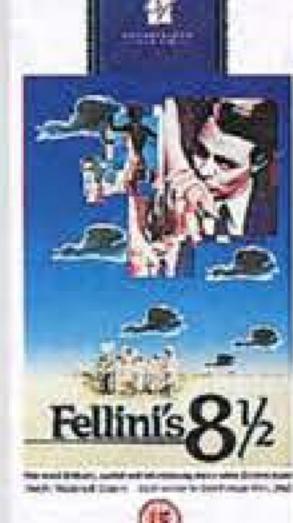
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Moral panic: the sequel

Contributors to this issue

Steve Beard is a freelance writer and critic David Caute has completed a biography of Joseph Losey X. M. Duverger is a lecturer at the University of West of England Lizzie Francke is completing a book on women screenwriters Sue Harper's book on British costume film will be published this year Anne Jackel is completing a book on European co-production

Rikki Morgan is a lecturer in Modern Languages, Thames Valley University Anna Muzzarelli has worked for the Pordenone film festival Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has

Written widely on
European cinema
Michael O'Pray is writing
books on Adrian Stokes
and Derek Jarman
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James Saynor was deputy editor of The Listener Howard Schuman is a writer whose credits include Selling Hitler

Paul Julian Smith is Professor of Spanish, University of Cambridge

Ginette Vincendeau is co-editor of the recently published Popular European Cinema

Video Supplement

lan Christie is the co-editor of Inside the Film Factory Jane Giles was a programmer at the Scala Cinema Sheila Johnston is film critic of The Independent Kim Newman, novelist and critic, has written Nightmare Movies Jill McGreal has written widely on animation Tony Rayns is a writer and broadcaster on cinema Annette Kuhn teaches film at Glasgow University David Thompson has recently edited Levinson on Levinson Peter Wollen, critic and film-maker, has recently published a book on Singin' in the Rain

Near the end of Sally Potter's fine film *Orlando*, there is a touching domestic sequence in which Orlando's child films her parent with a camcorder. This innocent moment, the pleasure of the child making images, is made more poignant given the context of hysteria that now surrounds the relationship between children and film. To listen to the politicians and to read the newspapers over the last weeks is to enter a world where cameras, films and screens of all sorts threaten at the very least the literacy of children, at worst their very being.

The Prime Minister and one of his cabinet demand an end to "screen violence". A columnist in *The Guardian* rushes to agree. The tabloids still demand the blood of Alan Yentob, the new controller of BBC1, even after he shifted a contentious episode of the popular series *Casualty* to after the 9.00pm watershed. *The Times* publishes an article by a teacher that asserts that images drown the imagination; *The Sunday Times* stages a much publicised event on cinema violence; the relevant books are already in the bookshops. No feature article on the cruel murder of James Bulger is complete without reference to a computer games arcade, for all the world as if such arcades should be in the dock alongside the accused.

For anyone with a sense of history, or a memory that stretches back even to the early 80s, the signs are obvious: 'We are in a moral panic'. But it is difficult to know what to prescribe for patients in such a condition. A dose of reading might do the trick: begin with Geoffrey Pearson's *Hooligan*, which looks at the history of moral panics around youth from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and then take as a supplement Martin Barker's *A Haunt of Fears*, a study of the moral panic around US comics and children in the mid-50s.

Of course this may not be effective, since it is not clear what the focus of the current moral panic is. After all, the object of the horror seems to be the screen in general – whether cinematic, televisual or computer – rather than any particular screen. And in order to be able to respond intelligently to the disquiet, it is

necessary at least to separate out the one screen from another.

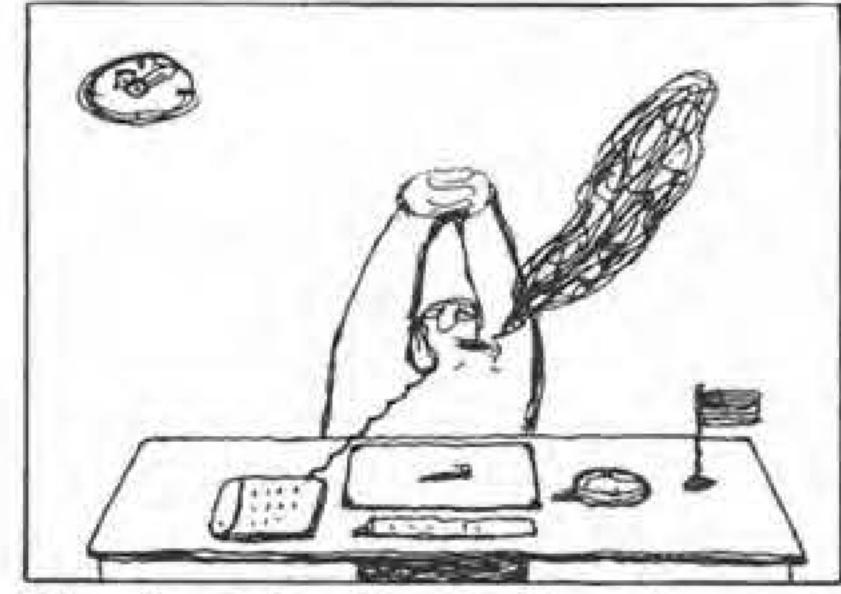
Television is certainly in general less controversial than 10 to 15 years ago, and it is difficult not to feel that the anger currently directed at the BBC's "irresponsibility" is calculated to coerce the corporation into total blandness at a moment when a new controller is finding his feet and when John Birt's tax affairs make him especially vulnerable. It was cheering to hear Alan Yentob resist the invitation to innocuousness. The last thing we need at the moment is television that is wall-to-wall *Barchester Towers*.

The arguments about film violence have a much longer history – and the positions are well rehearsed. But it would be idle to pretend that the emergence of video, which gives children and young people access to films the BBFC's classification system has traditionally denied them, has not put the liberal position under pressure. What is needed now is some large-scale research to document what video young people watch at home, what they think about what they watch, and what are their parents' motivations and judgments. At present not only do we not have the answers, but we scarcely know how to frame the questions. Research will not end the argument, and certainly will not determine the judgment, but it might help to stop anecdote ("Girl of 11 has seen Silence of the Lambs 200 times", Daily Mirror) from running the debate.

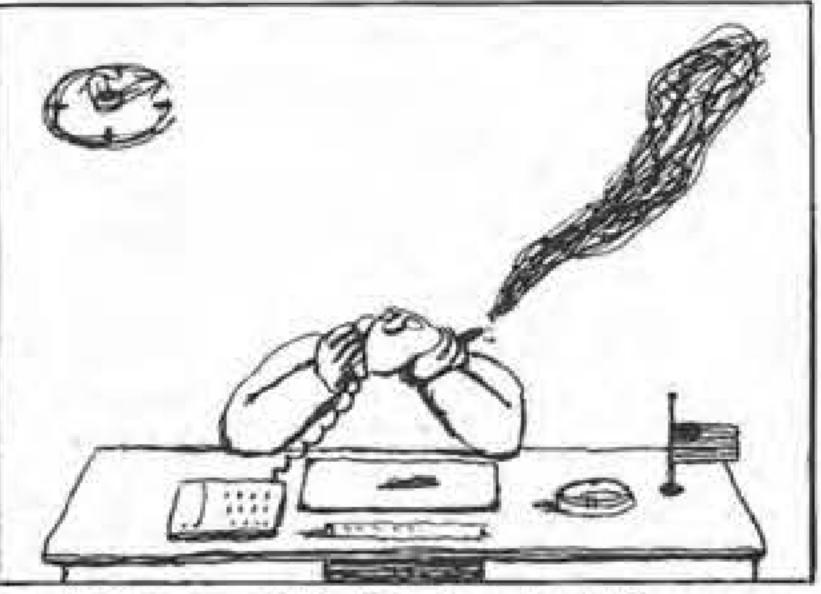
In the meantime, while the Moral panic, it is worth noticing that the same government that loathes screen violence seems at best indifferent, at worst hostile to the inclusion of Media Studies in the National Curriculum. Yet those who are suspicious of the flickering screen should surely want school students to know how to 'read' films – and even to learn how to make them. The small child in Potter's *Orlando*, at ease with cameras, offers a better vision of the future than the same child, ignorant of how films are made, surrounded by panicking adults who foolishly believe that they can keep young people from contamination by the modern world.

JERRY ON LINE #1

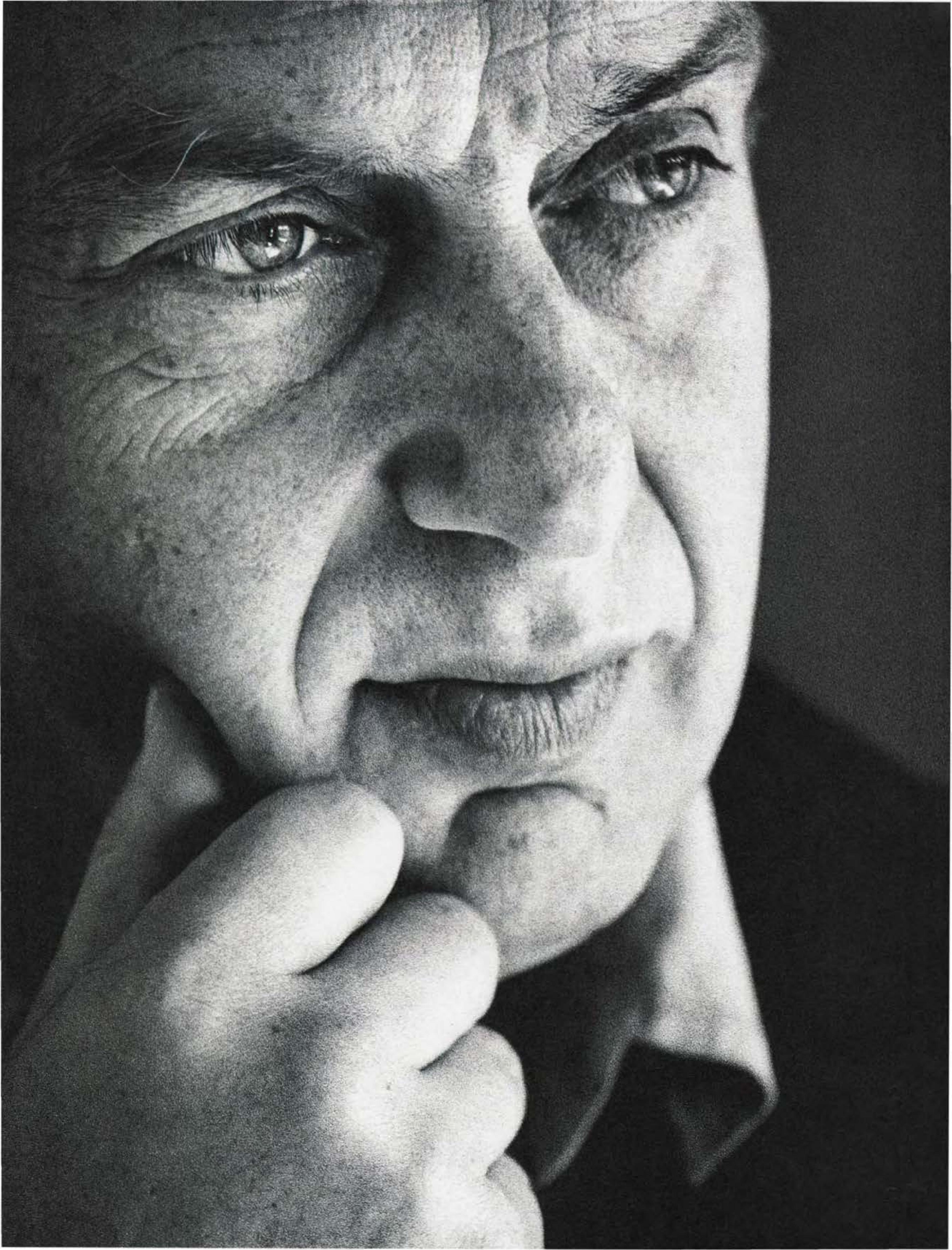
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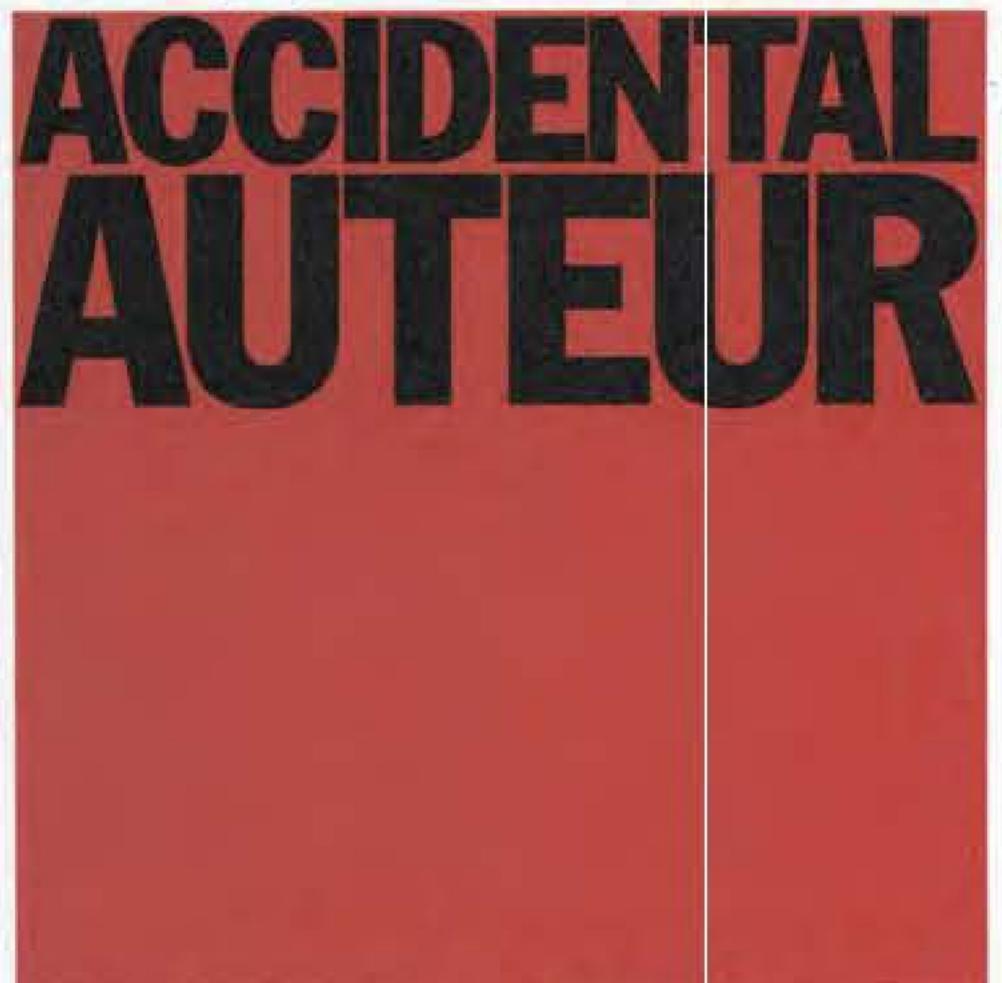
"Jerry here's how it works. Every few years a bunch of Brit movies take our oscars, do box-office, & have us guilt-tripping about the crassness of our own product-then quick as you can say "3 picture deal", they're in Hollywood making our crass films for us. So don't worry."



The title of Stephen Frears' first big studio movie, Columbia's \$55 million Accidental Hero, has an appropriately self-apologetic ring to it, in keeping with the spirit of its director, Britain's foremost accidental auteur. There has never been a film-maker quite like Frears for belittling his own... well, whatever it is that film-makers do. Frears, for one, rarely seems to be sure: "It embarrasses me to be thought more artistic than I am," he has said at almost every available opportunity. When it comes to the input of producers: "I like to be told what sort of film it is and what I should be thinking." On the subject of film crews: "They could perfectly well do without me. I never know what I'm supposed to be doing anyway." Frears likes to tell a story, true or not, about how Darryl Zanuck shot the ending to My Darling Clementine, directed by one of his heroes, John Ford. "Directors," he avers, "are treated with an absurd amount of respect... Actually, I think of myself as a plumber or a carpenter."

But this foppish, distrait attitude co-exists with a more tenacious side to his temperament, which may maul the ears of interviewers, put actors through the mangle, and lead to threatened Hollywood walk-outs, as happened on Accidental Hero. Looking as though he's just stepped out of a spin-dryer, the 51-year-old director can come over in person as a disconcerting amalgam of the Mad Hatter, Tony Hancock and Harold Skimpole, the dangerously false-naive eccentric in Charles Dickens' Bleak House. His hard-to-read manner of airiness and pragmatism, gaiety and grit, facetiousness and spleen, permeates his movies and makes them exceptionally difficult to categorise.

The famous Frears sardonicism emerges, on the face of it, in diluted form in *Accidental Hero*. The film is an agreeably ingenious comedy about a petty thief (Dustin Hoffman) – a



'Prick Up Your Ears', the new big studio film 'Accidental Hero' is a Stephen Frears film. But what is a Frears film? By James Saynor

grouchy, broken-windscreen-wiper of a man - § who can't bring himself to believe that he's ? capable of something decent. When an aero-\{\bar{2}} plane comes down on the road in front of his 2 car, he snarls, "What's the problem, pal?" at the screaming passengers trapped in the about-toignite fuselage, then reluctantly helps them all to safety. The incident is passing from his mind until a low-lifer he's met (Andy Garcia) bogusly claims a \$1 million reward from a television station for being the anonymous "Angel of Flight 104". Geena Davis plays a slinky, gogetting television reporter who was on the flight, and who engineers the media hoopla that builds Garcia into a cross between Norman Schwarzkopf and the Messiah.

Ben Hecht and Preston Sturges were, by all accounts, texts from which Frears drew nourishment during the shoot. The story is a play on the word 'credit' in an age when the moral landscape has been entirely bought up and remarketed by the media: the funniest thing in the film is the way Garcia's dishonest reticence does duty for quiet courage in the public eye. Geena Davis talks with the foxy-voiced speed of a Sturges or Capra character, but the overall pace lags well behind. The screwball tradition of the 30s and 40s is inflected, too, with much more contemporary neuroses, set off by the inward-looking performance of Hoffman - endlessly embroidering scenes with low-register rigmaroles and a wandering-eyed intensity. Hoffman's performance-tuning and script adjustments reportedly caused the production much anguish during the shoot, but his numerous sideways moments of actorly business are just the sort of fatuous-fastidious embellishments we expect in a Stephen Frears movie - as are the picture's twisting story course, generic indeterminacy, safaris across class lines and frequently modulating pitch.

Alan Bennett once said that the director is as much interested in the happenings on the edge of the frame as those at the centre, and the endings of his films have often been the site of restlessness and indecision. Hoffman said that he eventually based his doubting, stubble-bum character on Frears himself. It makes for a curious kind of tail-wagging-the-dog reverse auteurism – the content of a film working its anxieties out through its director, rather than the other way around. But it seems appropriate to the odd, deferential methodology of the man at the helm.

Accidental Hero is Frears' tenth theatrical offering. He was born in 1941 in the nowhere-ville of Leicester, birthplace also of Joe Orton. His father was an oft-absent accountant ▶

◀ turned doctor, his mother a social worker. This crabbed rung of the matter-of-fact middle class seems to have bred a queasiness towards the art of the higher elite, as well as a lifelong aversion to the philistine graspings-from-below of the petty bourgeoisie. Inhibitions set in early; after a withdrawn adolescence, he got to Cambridge, where he studied law alongside John Cleese, then found himself a junior job at the Royal Court in the early 60s.

Amid this solar system of showy talent, Frears felt terrifyingly inadequate, and flunked out. His contacts, though, led to jobs as an assistant to Karel Reisz on the 1966 film Morgan: A Suitable Case for Treatment and on Lindsay Anderson's If... (1968). He raised money from the BFI for a short film of his own, The Burning (1967), and later entered television, where he worked for the best part of the next 15 years, turning out around 25 single dramas of varying formats until he finally made his name with one that only accidentally became a movie.

Reisz's Morgan may be as good a place as any to start to seek the origins of the slippery Frears aesthetic. This ballooning piece of end-of-the-road Free Cinema, about a gesticulating fantasist (David Warner) who disrupts the home of his ex-wife, has a lusty-fragmentary attitude, a quirky sense of comedy, a sharp yet sybaritic camera style and a fondness for unusual optical devices. It also features cross-class collisions, louring violence, characters who toy with politics and sappy-smart one-liners ("Violence has a kind of dignity in a loving man," Warner declares).

Frears' role on the film was no doubt negligible, but in many ways Morgan reads like a middle-to-late-period Frears movie avant la lettre. Frears' magpie intelligence has gone on to draw from many sources beyond the swinging-London movies of the mid-60s, but something of their odd 'decadent realism' – and of the inner stress that this formulation implies – remains close to the heart of many of the projects he has subsequently chosen.

Before Frears began the cliff climb of forging a reputation as a director of single dramas within the closed world of British television, he directed one ill-fated feature of his own, the 1971 *Gumshoe*. An association with Albert Finney on the film *Charlie Bubbles* (1967) helped get this bizarre pastiche off the ground. Finney played a northern bingo-caller turned fantasist private eye, and the untidily realised movie – luxuriating in drabness, but in a camped-up way that strangely anticipated Dennis Potter's *The Singing Detective* – was an attempt at intense stylisation which few liked and which seems

to have sent Frears back to the drawing board as a director.

Ensconced by now at the BBC, he found any towards dilettantism sharply tendencies choked off, as he took a daunting apprenticeship at the feet of neo-realist gods like Ken Loach and Tony Garnett. "They somehow laid down the rules along which this game was going to be played, and it was played on a very, very high level of intelligence," a still awestruck Frears told me in 1985. "It was like walking into a lion's den: the people were so much cleverer than people nowadays. You were standing at a big bottleneck, and the scripts just poured in. You could come to the end of a job, and someone would offer you something really decent, really good stuff, to start work on in two weeks' time."

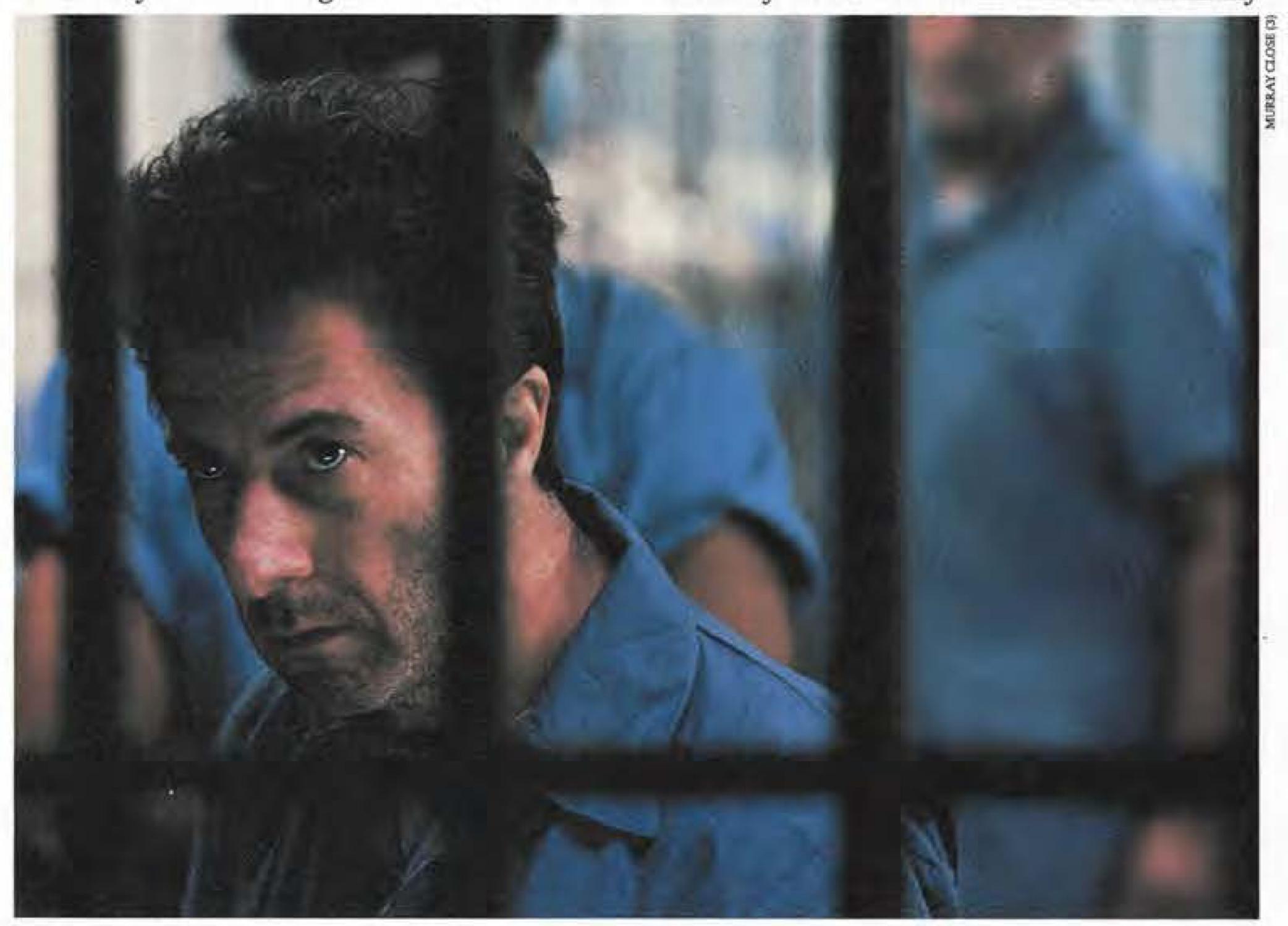
Acting riches

The tradition Frears became immersed in was Loachian naturalism, the unflashy documenting of the downhill social condition. "We were trained to make films that said, 'This is what Britain is like'," Frears recalled. (Even on the set of Accidental Hero he was reportedly pleading with Hoffman, "It has to be simple. You know, people used to think we'd shot our films on the street just as we found them.") This was at some remove from the high-profile pyrotechnics of people like John Boorman, Ken Russell, John Schlesinger or Nicolas Roeg, whose more ostentatious styles Frears might well have followed

had he persevered in the feature-film arena at that time.

His first BBC film was A Day Out (1972) by Alan Bennett, the story of a trip to a ruined monastery by a cycling club in the Yorkshire of 1911. Its 'realism' draws on the mannerly observational probings of Renoir and early Truffaut. The film is built around a series of ruminations and nigglings among the socially diverse group, shot in misty-morning black and white. My films aren't photographically flashy, because I come from an arts background as opposed to a photographic one," Frears explained at the time. "I don't know a great deal about what the camera can do." A Day Out is made with a deft simplicity that would mark Frears' work until the late 70s, though the film still contains exhilarating travelling shots of the bicyclists barrelling down the lanes, and cautious camera tracks here and there. Frears also tried to reform the BBC's primitive postproduction practices, looping much of the dialogue to an extent (and an expense) that stunned insiders.

His quiet success in the 70s was founded on such creative and strategic manoeuvres that belie his self-image today as a scatty journeyman who just waits for things to turn up. Most notably, he revered the writer as the nucleus of each project to an extent greater than even the master, Loach, usually determining that they be present on set – a commitment that continues today. This led to collaborations with many



He's no angel: Dustin
Hoffman as sleazebag
supreme Bernie Laplante
in Stephen Frears'
'Accidental Hero'

top-of-the-milk television-drama scribes of the period: Bennett, Neville Smith (who had penned *Gumshoe*), Tom Stoppard, Christopher Hampton and Peter Prince. Frears worked quickly, but liked to be inspired by the "chaos" of the set, and didn't pre-plan things much in advance. He disliked the electronic studio, and – in common with the director Roland Joffé – cannily learned how to buck the BBC's film-resource system in order to work with the best cinematographers, who were otherwise dealt projects by rotation. He learned how, at a hypocritical British institution like the BBC, you have to "half-lie" to survive – and that those who do are rewarded for it.

Although most of Frears' 70s work looks unassuming, there are aspects of his films that many viewers will still recall vividly today - the bicycling shots in A Day Out; the demon fastbowler disappearing beneath the brow of a hill as he takes his run-up in an adaptation of A. G. Macdonell's England, Their England (1973); the refreshing lack of whimsy in Stoppard's rendering of Three Men in a Boat (1975), with Tim Curry, Stephen Moore and Michael Palin. Frears had found a way, too, of attracting the country's liveliest performing talent to his work, and of casting them imaginatively. Norman Wisdom was to take the lead as a cancer victim in Going Gently (1981); another comic in a straight role was Dave Allen as an estate agent in One Fine Day, one of a series of Bennett scripts Frears produced and directed for London Weekend Television in 1978. (These last works perhaps best sum up Frears' clout with actors: they contain almost an embarrassment of acting riches in cameo parts.)

It seems to have been the influence of cinematographers that injected more filmic spring into his output in the latter half of the 70s, causing heady new blooms of 'style' to sprout on a sturdy realist stem. He had been honoured to work with one of Loach's legendary lensmen, Brian Tufano, though on Bennett's plaintive retirement saga, Sunset Across the Bay (1975), the camera style was still static and 'classical'. But when Frears and Tufano collaborated on Peter Prince's Playthings (1976) - a short, sharp story of urban delinquency featuring Jonathan Pryce more razzmatazzy stuff was going down. Playthings, Frears said, was shot "fast and rather giddily". Reviewed today, it has a deliciously twisted verve.

Nat Crosby, who lensed Roland Joffé's groundbreaking *The Spongers* (1978), and the Storaro-influenced Chris Menges, keen on daringly low light levels, were two cameramen equally influential in assaulting television's

'institutional modes of representation' at this time. Despite the grim subject matter – terminally-ill hospital patients – Crosby and Frears decided to shoot the BBC's Going Gently in a heightened, thrillerish way, with Spongers-like long, complex takes. Broad, shiny hospital floors enabled the development of elaborate corridor tracking shots that would later become a Frears trademark. Crosby believed that "every scene has only one, perfect angle", and Frears' work today is always distinguished by beautifully balanced mise en scène – colour, line and mass distributed with great care.

New radicalism

Menges, who had shot Gumshoe, was in place for Frears' third effort to reach the big screen, Black Lion Films' Bloody Kids (1979, released theatrically in 1983). Frears had been impressed by the visual elan of movies like Scorsese's New York, New York (1977), shot by Laszlo Kovacs: it was "so stunning, evocative, moving". He had the urge to rebel against the classical, realist mode, but felt "inhibited" about letting the camera go waltz-about independent of the actors. Bloody Kids, though, was a great loosener - a highly fevered piece of social commentary from the pen of Stephen Poliakoff about young drop-outs rampaging through the night-time public spaces of Southend: feral, elliptical, headlong and pulse-lit. It started with a vivid car crash and ended with a hospital descending into anarchy. It marked the beginning of



Creating a coup: television journalist Geena Davis, top, and man-of-the-moment Andy Garcia, above, both in 'Accidental Hero'

Frears' mature work: he was becoming, if not an auteur, at least a réalisateur-with-demons.

When The Hit came out in 1984, critic Philip Strick posited some cautious auteurism regarding the film's producer, Jeremy Thomas. (Eureka and Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence had also been roads to an ambiguous hell, featuring charismatic renegades-cum-martyrs.) But nobody then thought of its director, Frears, as a filmmaker with much of a mission – though his craftsmanship was highly prized.

The Hit, scripted by Peter Prince, is an execution movie in which two assassins (John Hurt's deracinated psycho and Tim Roth's wanton pistol-punk) transport a traitorous associate (the unnervingly seraphic Terence Stamp) across Spain to his death. All three are playing a game of chicken with mortality, and the movie is structured around a series of action/repose elements - much like flamenco - as the figures crawl and scrap in a barren, vaguely Fordian landscape. From today's perspective, it's clear that the off-kilter violence, zig-zag pace, 'fascinating' sociopaths and uneasy air of moral relativism make The Hit as much of a quintessential Stephen Frears movie as a Jeremy Thomas one.

In his films, Frears was agreeing by 1985, "there is a kind of intensity... It's sort of uncontrollable – it just bursts out in some terrible way. I wish I could control it, but I can't." This newly volcanic style had served him poorly on the overwrought Channel 4 disability drama Walter (1982), and only ambiguously well on The Hit. But with My Beautiful Laundrette (1985) Frears' new-found "audaciousness", as he called it, reteamed with the old social-realist grounding to fine effect.

The arrival of Hanif Kureishi's screenplay on his doormat energised Frears with a new political radicalism. The Thatcher years had put the values of the mean-minded lower-middle classes in the ascendant, and Frears was ready to give them a drubbing. Reading his comments from this time, you get the sense that his much-publicised anti-Thatcher crusades of the late 80s were less intellectually based and more the product of a kind of class phobia towards shopkeeper attitudes. In any case, My Beautiful Laundrette certainly wasn't designed as an 'ethnic' film, any more than the later Prick Up Your Ears (1987), an Alan Bennett script about Joe Orton, was intended as a 'gay' movie.

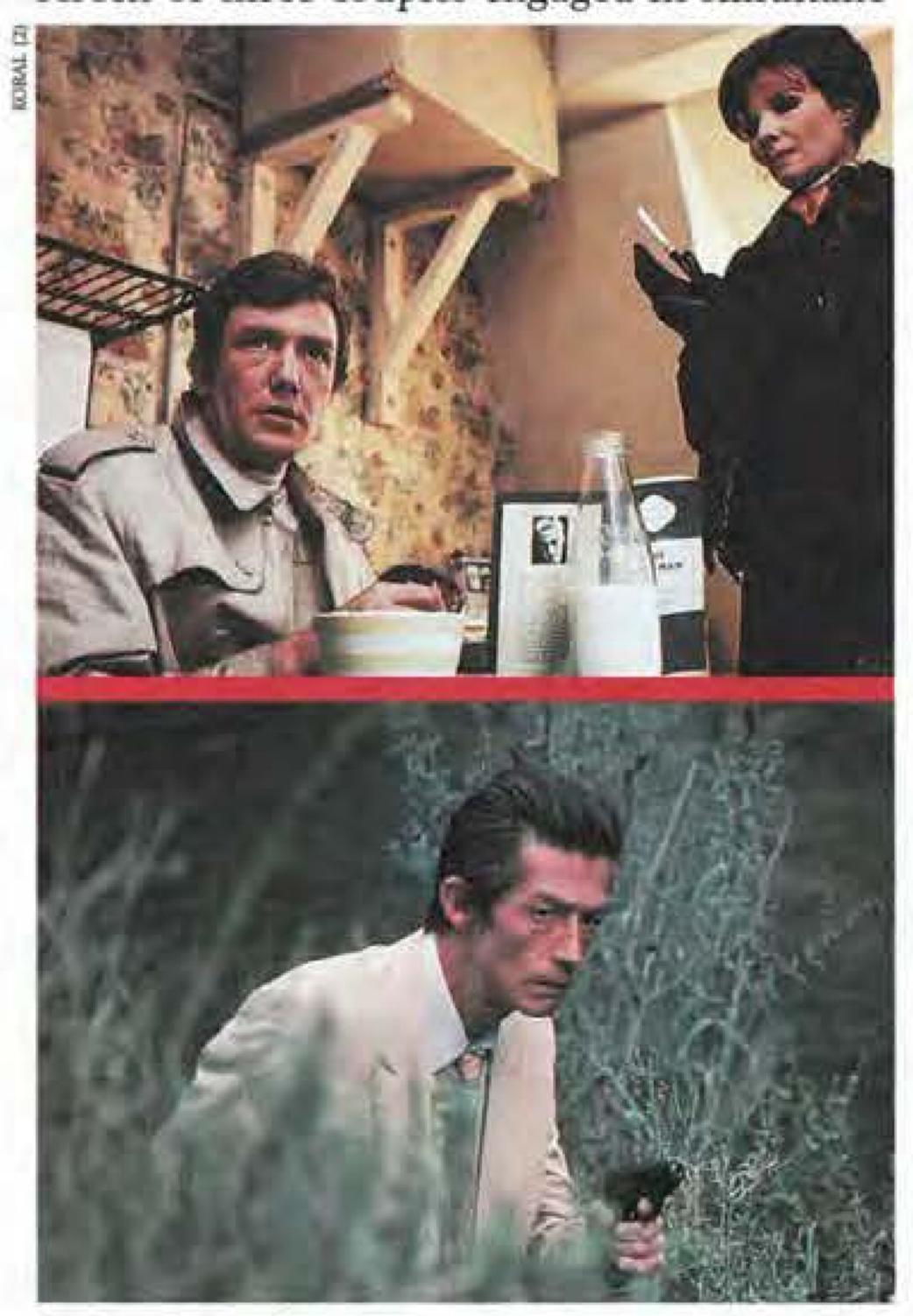
Kureishi, quoted last year in *Vogue*, noted Frears' role: "He would always encourage me to find material in myself and be courageous and uninhibited. He liberated me as a writer and, in a sense, changed my life." The closeness of ▶

◀ this collaboration – which continued on their follow-up effort, Sammy and Rosie Get Laid (1987) – tends to undermine Frears' frequent assertions that he can only work to other people's hard-baked texts, and that he doesn't buy into the notion of any "director's input" at the screenplay stage.

Looking west

Channel 4's My Beautiful Laundrette was shot cheaply for the small screen (by Oliver Stapleton, who has been Frears' most regular cinematographer since), and its theatricalisation was a source of unease for the director. Its scenario is sinuous, but its visual style has an urchin directness, for all the screenplay's occasional nods towards a Rushdie-ish magical realism, and for all the proliferation of actorly business taking place at the sides of the frame. Two images endure, though - a giant crane shot taking us 180 degrees over the roof of a building (the result of an elaborate piece of equipment arriving on the location on the wrong day); and the shot of Daniel Day-Lewis and Gordon Warnecke illicitly making out in the launderette's back office while Warnecke's uncle (Saeed Jaffrey) and his moll (Shirley Anne Field) are seen waltzing decorously amid the washing-machines through a cinema-shaped one-way mirror.

Sammy and Rosie Get Laid took this latter idea a stage further with its famous longways split screen of three couples engaged in simultane-



Men in trouble: Albert Finney as the fantasist private eye in 'Gumshoe', top; John Hurt as a deracinated psycho in 'The Hit', above

ous horizontal mambo. Billed as "by" Hanif Kureishi, this was nevertheless a full-blown movie, part funded from American sources, and in this second enquiry into polymorphous behaviour patterns in the London of the 'half-lie', the bricolage around the edges threatened to swamp the entire film. The ghetto was even more provocatively eroticised, as the swirling, spray-painted narrative cluttered up with all manner of verbal and visual motto-making. As in My Beautiful Laundrette, though, the need for reconciliation had pressed itself on the characters with an unlikely urgency by the close.

These two films caught the attention of Martin Scorsese, but before Frears could make his first move to America for the Scorsese-produced The Grifters, Christopher Hampton had suggested that Frears should helm Dangerous Liaisons (1988) - a handy, off-Hollywood project for a director by now looking west but chary of tangling with the American majors with their lax attitudes towards writers. Frears himself was keen on using US actors for Hampton's script of sexual gladiatorialism in pre-revolutionary France, and shot the film tight in on the talk and the performances. Time and space pressures are accordingly handled with control absent from much of Frears' other work, though the movie has a typically gulped ending (which, frankly, is better realised in Milos Forman's otherwise dull version of the same story, Valmont, 1989).

In the late 70s Frears had expressed a yen to do American-style thrillers, but wondered how this could be managed in the literary style he preferred: "I just can't imagine bringing all the elements together." The Grifters (19:90) finally seemed to offer a solution, as Jim Thompson's dime-store Greek tragedy was turned into a tense-but-talky film noir update by Frears and screenwriter Donald Westlake. The concerns of Frears' movies of the 80s with sex and untruth (or lying and lying) reached some sort of blood-suffused summation in this saga of three conartists (excellently played by Anjelica Huston, John Cusack and Annette Bening) upended by their own sleight-of-hand psychologies.

Though nominally set on the west coast in the present, *The Grifters* is visualised in a timeless La-La Land (with no automobiles younger than 1975 models), a look reminiscent of a David Lynch movie – though, as Frears noted, "where Lynch celebrates [this], I try to conceal it." And it is Frears' tactics of concealment, of shoe-shuffling subversion and veiled referencing – not to mention occasional, good old British wind-uppery – that usually make his films too ingrowing ever to sit easily in the

commercial mainstream (though Dangerous Liaisons did blockbusterish business).

Projects carry bewildering baggages of old-movie influences. My Beautiful Laundrette was at one stage going to be like a British Godfather, then Frears decided to borrow, variously, from Minnelli and Rebel Without a Cause. Double Indemnity was a subtext for Dangerous Liaisons. The narrative structure of Prick Up Your Ears was inspired by All About Eve. Bullitt was an improbable early template for Gumshoe. "It is," Frears has said, "like living in a junk shop." It's a junk shop of in-jokes and inhibitions – about film history, about Englishness and Americana, and about character contrasts between the withdrawn and the dangerously bewitching – that often remain highly ironised and criss-crossed.

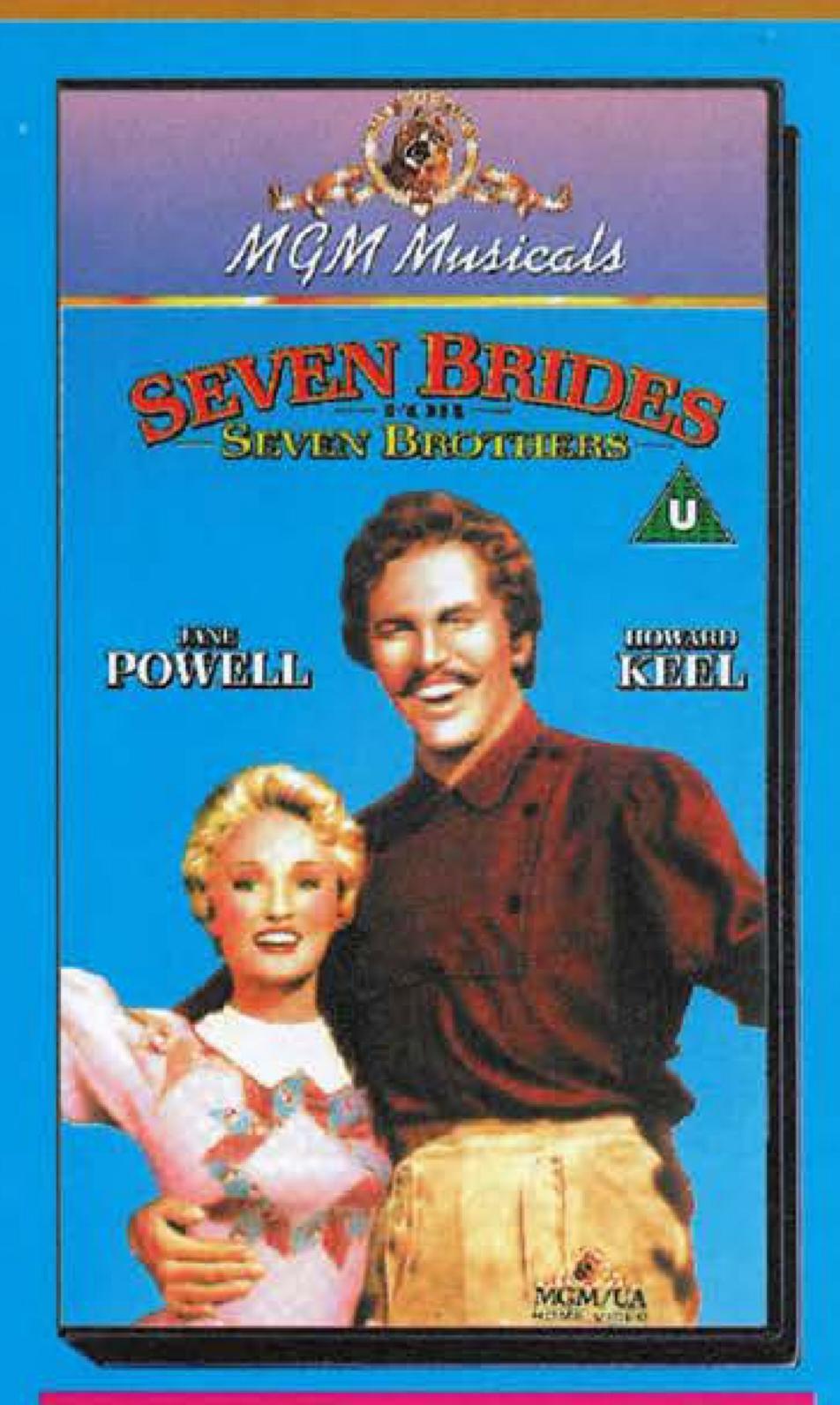
A mixed-up Briton

The Frearsian blend of reserve and expressionism remains a puzzling, Alice in Wonderland
commodity. At one time, Frears has said: "My
rebellion against Britishness seems to dictate a
lot of my actions... [The British] are repressive,
small-minded and insular." At another: "I'm
very happy with my repression. It's gotten me
this far, thank you." He's a walking film encyclopedia who "always gets embarrassed when
people use phrases like film noir." He's fascinated by American cinema but repelled by its
"clichés and B-movie lines". He's a thorn-in-theestablishment leftist who claims: "I always find
that whatever I say, I could say the opposite."

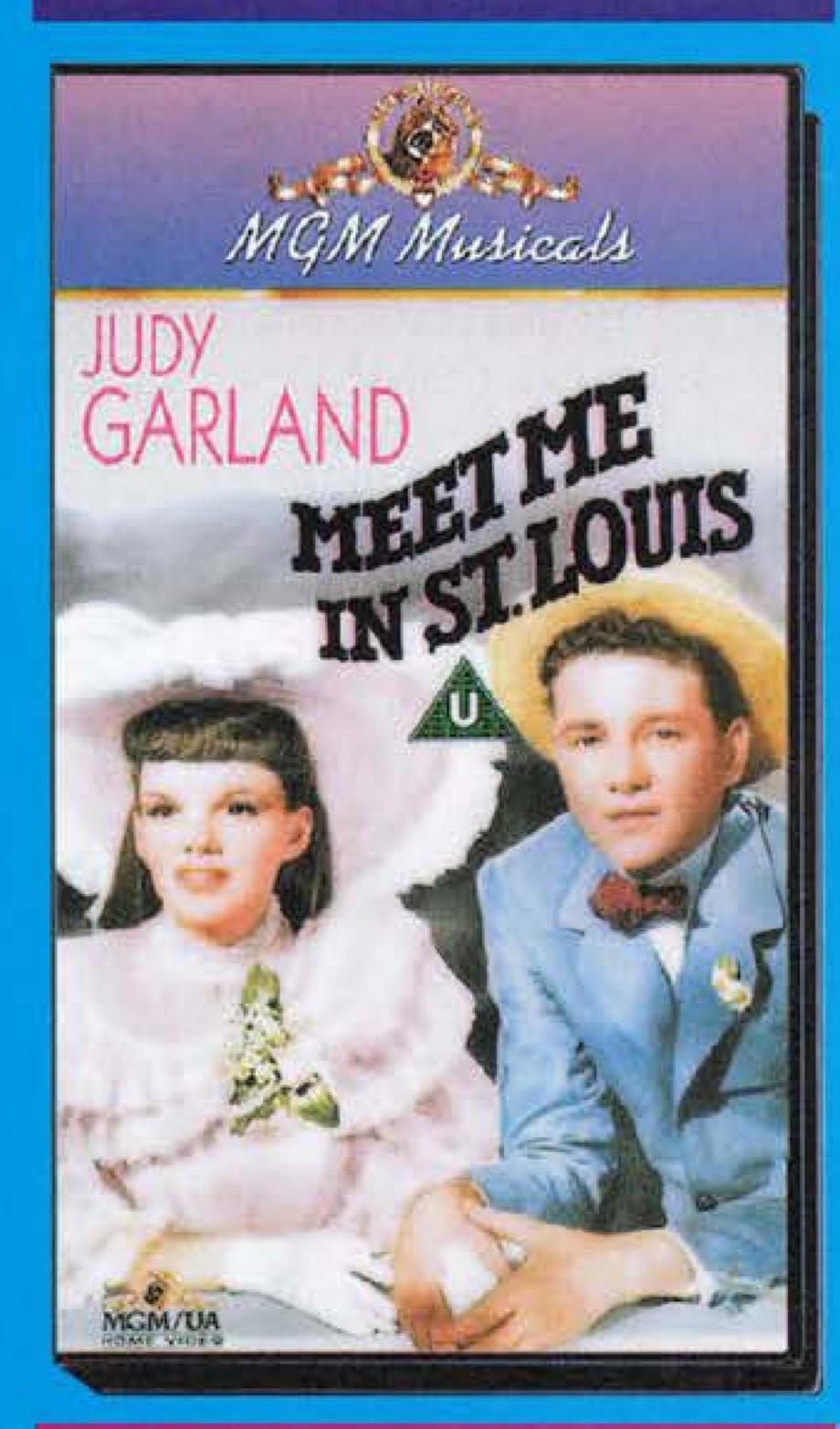
From the hideously bloated and difficult Accidental Hero (during which the director was hospitalised for a time with a heart complaint), Frears has recently retreated back to British television and The Snapper, a BBC adaptation of Roddy Doyle's Dublin bicker-fest, due to be screened in April. Essentially, Frears is part of the adaptable, and arguably rather bland line-up of British craftsmen directors who emerged from the BBC or advertising in the wake of Free Cinema in the 60s and 70s. But he's among the most interesting of them because of his unerring nose for literate scripts and dynamic performances, and because his attitudes are more pungent than your average Alan Parker or Ridley Scott, for all that he may fall a little behind in technique, and for all that he's not a natural storyteller. He may be unique in world cinema in believing in faithful naturalism from a vantage point of abject incredulity. It adds up to a patented kind of post-realism that probably only a mixed-up Briton could bring to the screen.

'Accidental Hero' opens on 16 April and is reviewed on page 42 of this issue

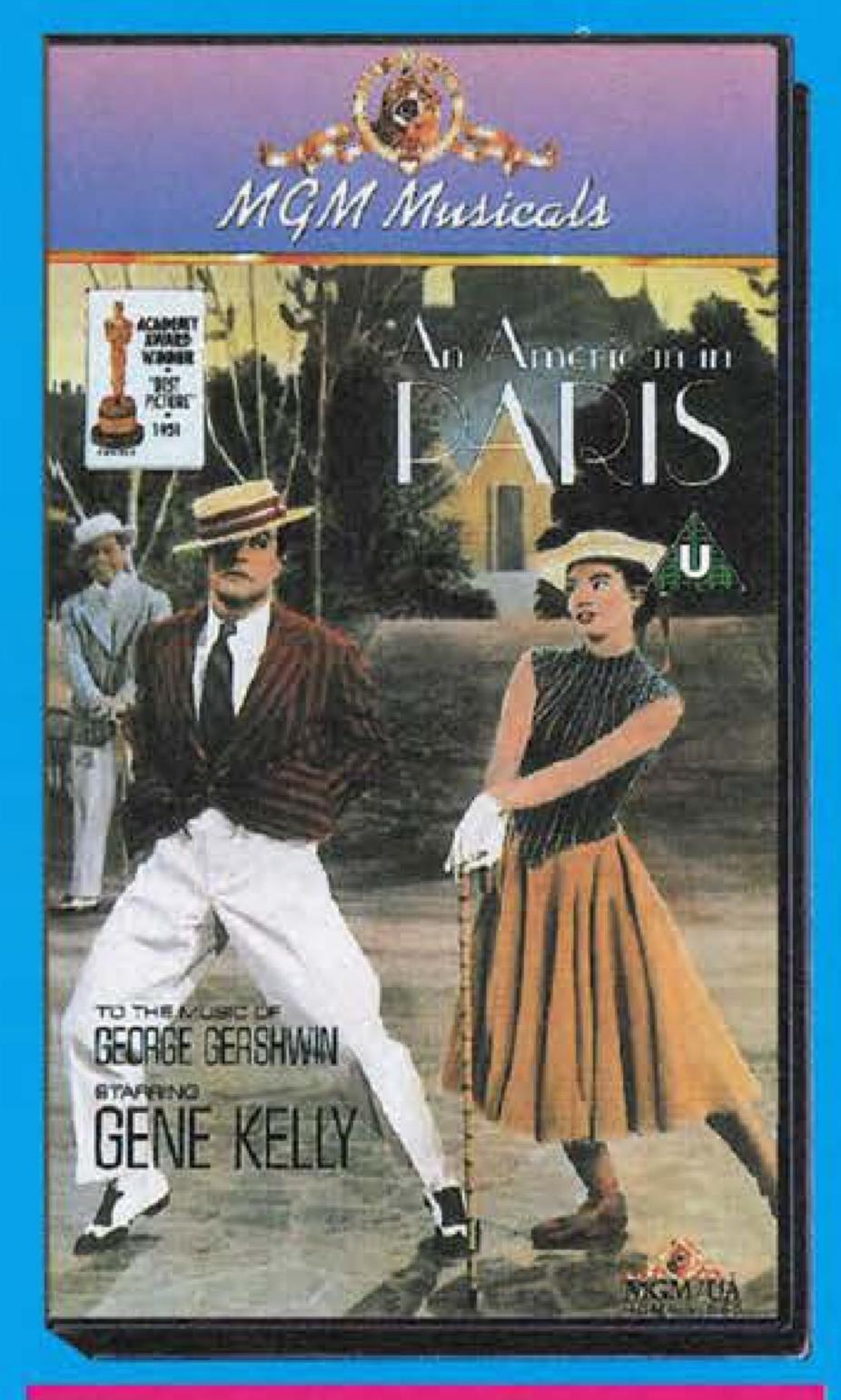
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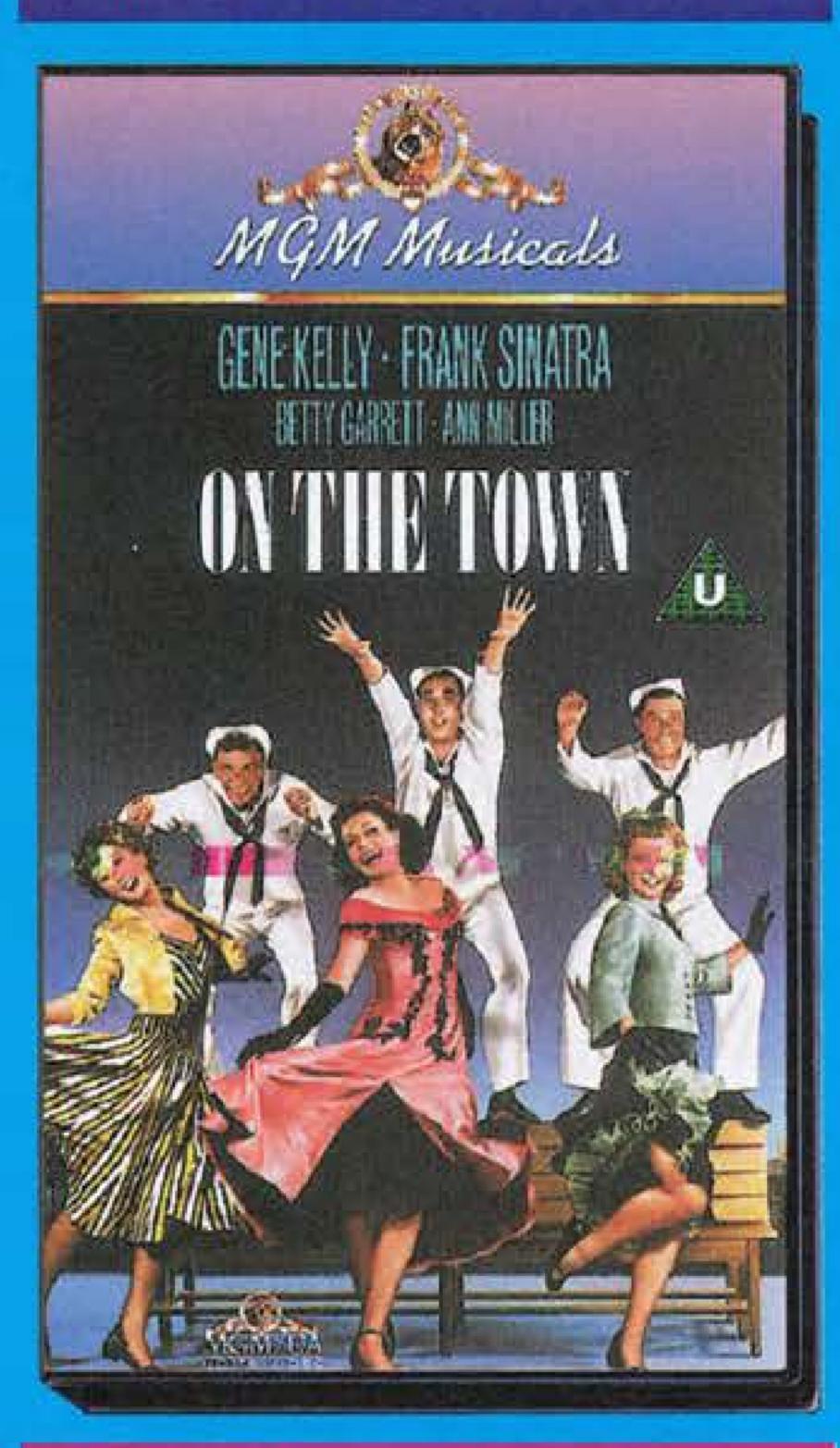
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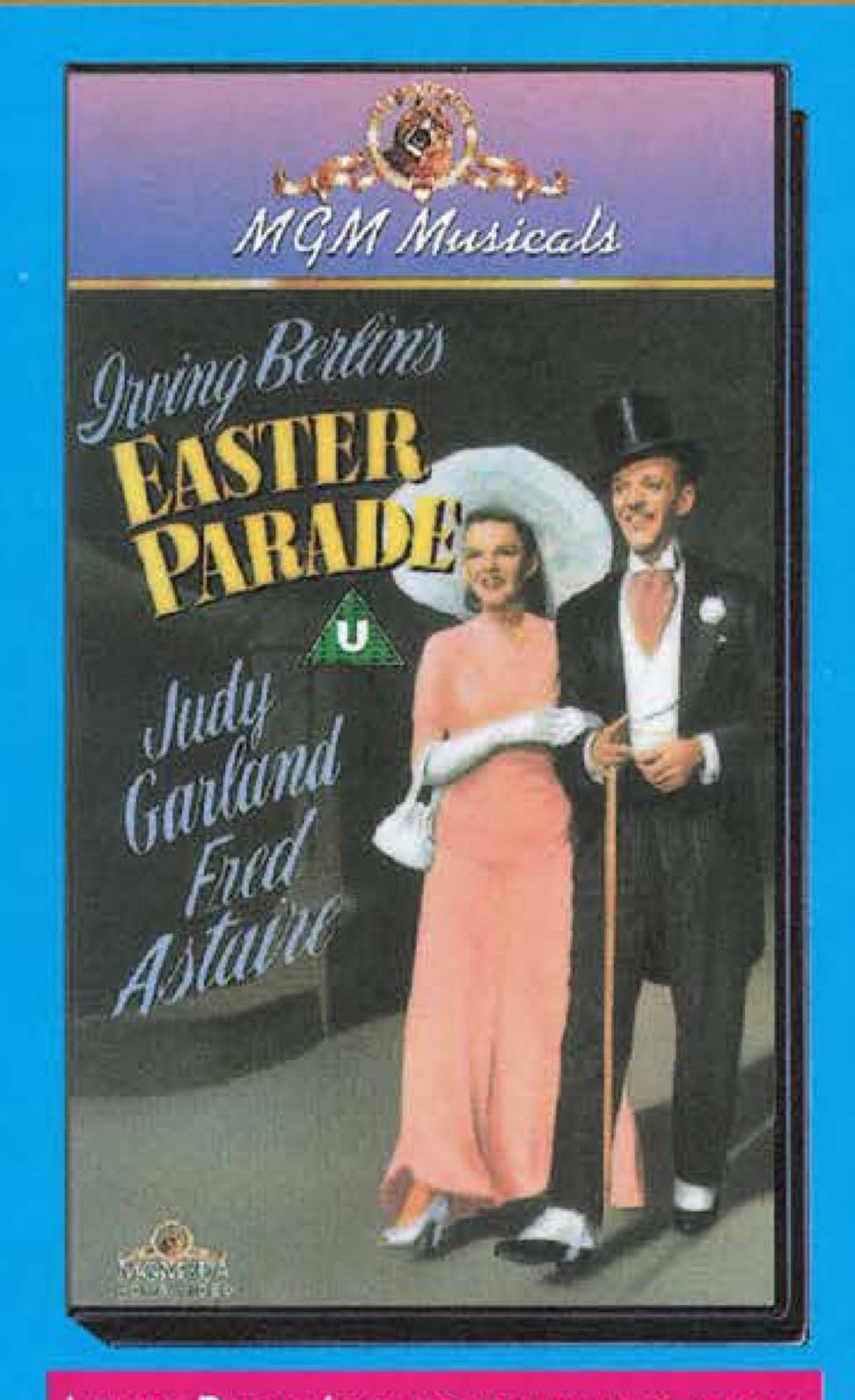
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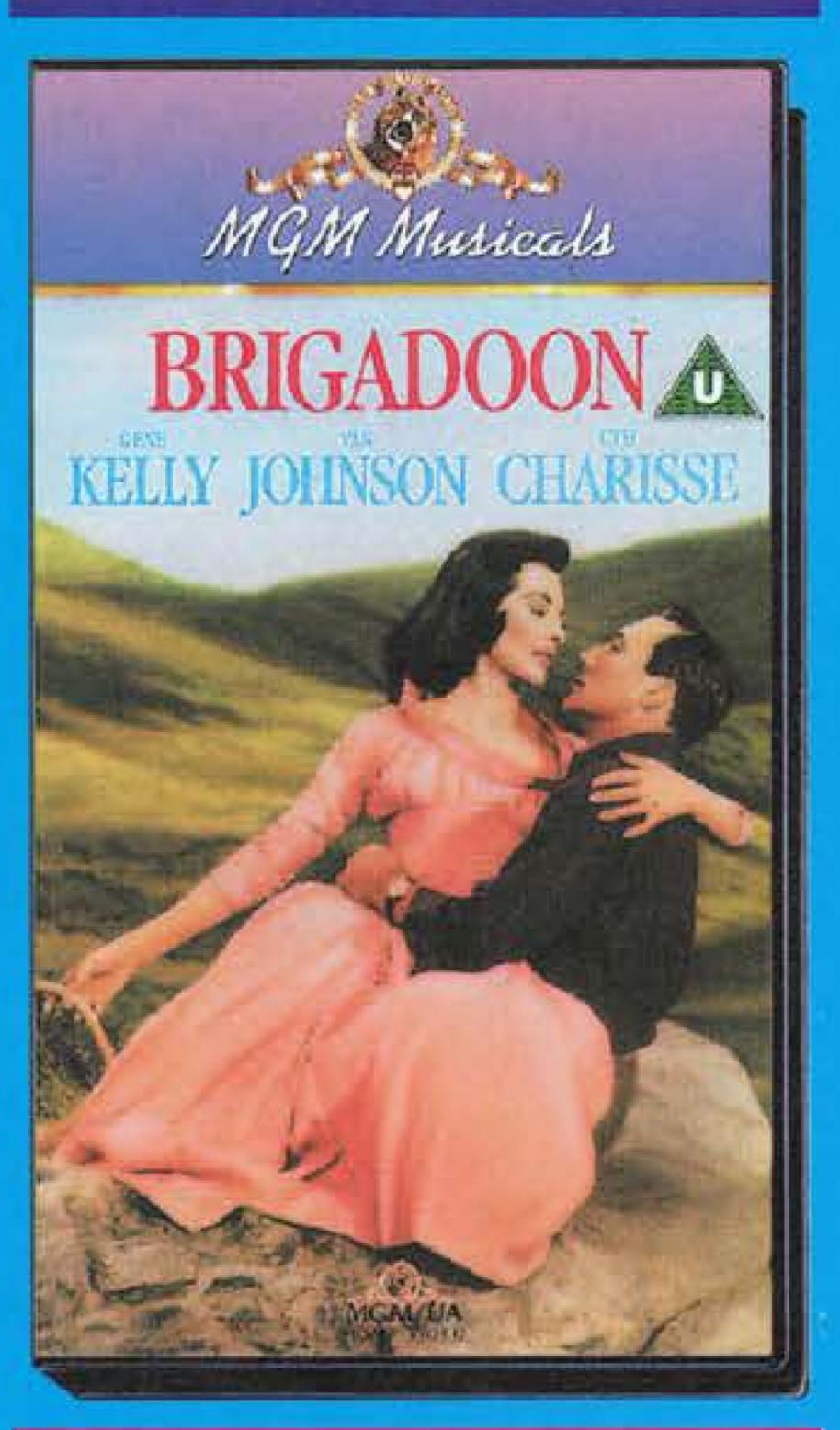
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IRVING BERLIN'S CLASSIC WITH NO FEWER THAN 17 HIT SONGS INCLUDING STEPPING OUT WITH MY BABY, WE'RE A COUPLE OF SWELLS AND DRUM CRAZY



LEGENDARY VINCENTE MINNELLI DIRECTS THIS BROADWAY HIT WHICH FEATURES THE HEATHER ON THE HILL AND ALMOST LIKE BEING IN LOVE

With the Ronettes and the Stones, the soundtrack of 'Mean Streets' said goodbye to the 60s. By Ian Penman

JUKE BOX AND JOHNNY BOY

The pop-up shoot-down soundtrack of Martin Scorsese's Mean Streets is the musical equivalent of a jump cut - spliced-in gunshots and exclamation marks and double takes of music cut to the rhythm of an unpredictable psychopathology, the juke-box mantra of rock/pop music echoing the movie's mood and fist swings. Mean Streets deals with characters -Charlie, Johnny Boy, Tony and Michael - who are no longer boys, but not yet men. They're guys: hip, hot-tempered, hubristic. These knights-errant of New York's Little Italy are into small-time heists and short-term pleasures; their articulation is clipped, staccato, wired, and so is their music. Juke-box and Johnny Boy - they're both fragmentation bombs just waiting to go off.

The music that intermittently grabs and rattles the film (Charlie's head hitting his pillow to the opening drumbeats of the Ronettes' 'Be My Baby', Johnny Boy swaggering into Tony's joint on the crest of the Stones' 'Jumpin' Jack Flash') isn't a discrete key-note, but one of several elements exciting the frame - flailing violence and delicate gesture, speech and camera rhythms, obscenity and prayer - which mark the film's unrelenting pulsion. It's as if music is released into the air by breaking glasses or moving bodies. It was smart to base large parts of the film around a juke-box (in Tony's bar/club), but more than that, the music works like a juke-box: apparently random bursts of three-minute economy rock/pop which sound just right, but never entirely pre-programmed.

The feel is very much darkness at the edge of the 70s: a shadier, slicker, shriller city aesthetic than the currently revived/received notion of that time of tacky innocence; or the easier option, then in vogue, of straight rock 'n' roll revival (Sha Na Na, American Graffiti, the Cruisin' compilations). Very Nik Cohn, very Cuban heels; an Italian-Jewboy hipster axis (like England's Mods, heavily in debt to black culture) rather than the WASPy wisps of Woodstock. The predominant sound is urban soul: Spector, Stones, Motown, classic doo wop, and hep fingerclickin' R'n'B like Johnny Ace and the appositely named Little Caesar and The Romans. Unlike our latterday commissioned rock soundtrack - the CD-lush slow choker (Bryan Adams, Whitney Houston, Annie Lennox being the latest) - this music screams back to mono!

Mean Streets taps into the same on-the-ledge malevolence, pervasive malignancy, as that identified by Joan Didion is her essay 'The White Album'. It could be heard in the music of the time across the dilapidated angst of The

Plastic Ono Band, The Doors, the junk-vexed USindexed Stones of Sticky Fingers and Exile On Main St. With Janis, Jimi and Brian Jones all RIPped; Jim Morrison and Presley expanding into their own entropic decline; and Lennon, Clapton, Keith Richards and others all temporarily junkshrouded, the 60s were definitely over. Scorsese may not have been the only one to notice this mood (a new noir will emerge in cinema, heralded by Paul Schrader's 1971 Notes on Film Noir), but he was one of the few to capture it; and Mean Streets is far bleaker - about the disappearing supports of a 'youth' culture - than anything before or after it (at least until the 1986 River's Edge, which bears some comparison). This does not make Mean Streets a Watergate film, but it does make it a more authentic rock film than Woodstock or Easy Rider, or any of the other misfires which always turn up in rock press logs of rock in cinema.

Easy Rider is the paradigmatic rock-studded movie; the songs set up a parallel narrative track, with no bumps or detours, simply keeping the characters on their linear way. Mean Streets is the anti-road movie. Pinned into their plush red maze, these guys are all flying centrifugal gestural movement - as opposed to the glazed zombie-hippies, the cruising wounded of Two-Lane Blacktop (1971), Easy Rider (1969), Five Easy Pieces (1970). In Mean Streets pleasure isn't a utopian project, a Reichian deliberation. Music doesn't equate with liberation - the jukebox rhythms are a claustro-strobic pile-up. (Like a real night out, the music swings between clarity and mush, in and out of focus, as clear or tight as you are over the course of the night.)

In the trajectory that stretches from the hope of Woodstock (1970) to the reunion of The Last Waltz (1978), music is life, not a mere backdrop. By the time of The Last Waltz, we can perceive the first signs of a self-referential culture where to be recognised as a member is enough to earn you a round of whoops and handclaps. The Last Waltz is the sort of superstar schmooze breaking bread rather than breaking heads that a "punk kid" like Johnny Boy would hate. It is rock as grand narrative, a rock of ages, assembly rather than dissolution - the music is uniformly sturdy, worthy, rooted, historically respectful - whereas the culture of Mean Streets operates at a molecular level of collision, speed, exorbitance, severe shudders of perspective, sudden drops into gallows' humour.

Mean Streets conveys that rather than humanistic values like solidarity and progress, the essence of teen spirit is a fly-by-night nihilism, built on excessive ups and diabolical downs. The siren-lure of rock is seductive because of its



The sound of music: Robert De Niro, breaking out all over

flaws, cathartic because it borders on nonsense; utterly frivolous, but with an undertow of resentment, violence, chemical redemption and other unacknowledged weights. It's about (as Charlie puts it) "doing it in the streets" rather than "making up for it in church" or on the couch.

There's a compulsion towards black culture here which manifests itself in lines of attraction and repulsion, as something which either way cannot be acknowledged or assimilated. Blackness echoes on the edges of Boystown: glances, jokes, liminal desires all try to negotiate an alien strain which is in every sense infectious. Black music, and especially doo wop, predominates. Everyone remembers 'Rubber Biscuit' by The Chips (behind Charlie weaving drunkenly through a Viet vet's homecoming party): a short, gaudy, runaway burst of layered male surrealism. Elsewhere, the statelier doo wop and slower soul numbers say everything the boys cannot: simple desires simply expressed, bordering on hymn-like effusion.

Doo wop is an interesting cross-cultural idiom. Originally – but not organically – black, but open to infusions of barbershop or girl group or high-school Italian: like the best pop idioms it is both transient and potentially timeless, embracing a harmony that is at times almost hymnal. (Historically, a lot of early 60s black music was a revamp of Gospel, with the unbearable pangs of teen love standing in for the body of Christ: thus making it – Lord knows – ideal for Scorsese.) In *Mean Streets*, doo wop is a heavenly chorus, the redemptive flip side to more demonaic sounds (which are in themselves white, 'debased' versions of black culture: the Stones, Eric Clapton).

Mean Streets is far 'blacker' than the jazz-

anchored New York, New York (1977) in capturing the sense of musical resonance as something daily and tenuously lived. The boys live in the midst of a rich patchwork culture, but are in every sense abusive of it. In the middle of a capital city, they can't get their compound tight enough: Chinese, Jews, blacks, gays all stray in from their own encampments and are swiftly ejected. The frontier of their beloved John Wayne has narrowed to nought, to a ghetto knot. Still linking them to The Searchers is a edginess about blood, blood's purity, about keeping it in the clan.

This culture is shown as gleefully paranoiac, ritualistic - but so is the culture it has replaced (embodied by Charlie's Uncle Giovanni, a Mafia higher-up). Both reduce the world to a set of empty flourishes. These are parallel worlds warped by a common insularity which goes right down into the blood. (A subplot about the mingling of inter-familial blood - Charlie's dating of Johnny Boy's sister Teresa - is at the heart, as it were, of the film.) Every pleasure is limned by an extra heartbeat of excess, of potential wounding and loss. These are worlds so insular that half the time they don't even understand each other's jokes or references or pleasures. All they can be sure of is a world of reflections (mirrors, clothes) and inchoate deals, and even here they fall out among themselves: neither youth nor ethnic culture can bind them together.

Mean Streets is brilliant on the recitative babble of male friendship (Cassavetes being the fatherly progenitor here). Just as the mode of address of the pop song is an ideal and generalised 'You', so the speech here is ceaselessly (and often pointlessly) interrogative, maintaining a rhythm which pushes the film forward and never sounds as stagey as a David Mamet.

Scorsese understands that the dialogue we most often remember (from this sort of movie) tends to be non-sequitur snatches – tenuous, febrile, street-rhetorical. The most repeated line from *Mean Streets*, and perhaps one of the most repeated pieces of dumb rhetoric in the movies, is: "What's a mook?" (Along with that other prize Scorsese/De Niro split-rhetorical interrogative: "You talkin' to me?"). Dialogue continually jumps into this interrogative mode, answering questions with further questions, setting up a rhythm in which nothing is ever settled, or agreed, or, in a sense, ever really said.

This badmouth vernacular is percussive, like Lenny Bruce hijacking jazz inflection and bebop skim. Johnny Boy's first appearance in the film introduces him not through dialogue but a big BOOM! – a too-literal outburst, when he pops a cherrybomb into a post-box (thus immediately wrecking the sturdy supports of the US mail/male). Johnny Boy's taunting rictus, his penultimate abuse of Michael – self-assertion as self-annihilation – have become as fixed in (NYC) subcultural iconography as Lou Reed's sneer or The New York Dolls' flounce or Johnny Thunder's nod.

He enters to 'Jumpin' Jack Flash' and exits to 'Hideaway'. (The former is a good choice, because if Johnny did listen to anything you can imagine it might be this, loud... or maybe 'Sympathy for the Devil'). Johnny Boy is not a man who lives by some code; he's like a Graham Greene character waiting for the code to pun-

ish him; he wants to be goosed by some great nothing he doesn't comprehend. The music slinks around the shadow motivations in the film, like knife blades in a street tango. Johnny moves like he is already caught in a hail of bullets. Whereas the others have business, women, or a pet tiger as sublimation, this Boy has no object, no other: he is pure untrammelled id, doing its inexorable dance. His only moment of calm is when Scorsese slows him down for the famous entry into Tony's bar.

It's almost as if De Niro carries the music around with him (in his hips, head, angles, jerky movements, gumchewing). When Johnny does his geek-dance around a waiting car to 'Mickey's Monkey' (on the face of it, an innocuous bop-soul number from Smokey Robinson and The Miracles) he's revelling in impending destruction, literally dancin' with Mr D: the mix of narrative (Johnny owes Michael/Mickey a swiftly mounting debt) and music is nowhere so volatile. It's almost as if the freedom promised by such music encourages Johnny to overstep the mark. It is all about a motion which is bottlenecked, fatally compromised by either hesitancy and deferral, or a compulsive lack of control. The rhythm of Scorsese's camera sets up a pulse of coming-going/leavingstaying; there is a carefully organised - but loosely applied - grammar of camera push-andpull between Charlie and Johnny Boy.

We've come to expect an operatic Mafia scene from the cinema, a slow unfurling dynastic design; but these streets are all hypertrophic movement, pettiness and scuffle. This is as unpretentious as street opera gets: it works in a way which more deliberated attempts at youth odyssey - Walter Hill's Streets of Fire, Absolute Beginners and so on – never could. Imitations or intimations of opera in the movies usually result in a supremely curdled bourgeois triumphalism, which, in turn, is only ever enjoyed by curdled bourgeois critics with insipid literary/erotic tastes. Mean Streets is a film given over to the passionate delusions of the voice; in its own way, it's as operatic as cinema gets: a Beggar's face-off, a sharkskin Bohème of blood, secrecy, quasi-incest, crime and obligation.

But music remains the background rather than the grail of this parable. Scorsese does the right thing: he shows that music is now a soundtrack, and nothing more, for these "crazy, mixed-up" kids. It may have become a substitute religion, but it is no more capable of healing their wounds than the original was. 'Mean Streets' has recently been re-released.

The re-release is reviewed on page 64 of this issue

INTHE MEAN TIME...

1. Let's not forget the Italian component: not just the occasional aria, but the little brass band which has a quasi-Brechtian role, wandering in and out of the celebrations for the Feast of Gennaro. It's a necessary counterpoint, describing its own eccentric parabola. These old guys and their wheezy pomp (they do a blaring, heavily cymbalic 'Stars and Stripes') are who Charlie's boys would have been in another lifetime. (Charlie, for one, might still end up there.) 2. For anyone wishing to trace the connections, the missing dark star in the firmament here - as in many others over the years - is Kenneth Anger. In films like 'Kustom Kar Kommandoes', Anger matched homoerotic visual

hardness with equivocally 'soft' music. It's one of the lessons that Scorsese has learnt well.

3. Scorsese was employed - as montage

supervisor - on 'Woodstock'; as he was on the slightly less epochal (but more watchable) 'Elvis On Tour'. 4. Take a look at the music for 'Who's That Knocking at My Door' (1969), which is, in every way, the predecessor of 'Mean Streets'. The Channels, The Bellnotes, The Genies, The Chantells as well as Junior Walker and The Doors. Take a look also at James Toback's 'Fingers' (1978), which is like a diagrammatic explication of the tensions which hold 'Mean Streets' together: Harvey Keitel has a gangster father and a concert-pianist mother, and tries to emulate both, at the same time. It makes for cod-Freudian psychology, but a cool schizo soundtrack.

5. We see the boys at the cinema watching 'The Searchers', and the clip features – what else? – an adolescent scuffle.

6. See also: Nick Tosches' recent biography of Dean Martin, 'Dino', for the narrative of how Italian boys, suspended between a solid rural past of assured ethnic identity and their urban now, stripped of the paternal law of custom and obligations, find that their duty fragments into questions of taste and style, and everything becomes relative, be it shirtcollar length, ethics, juke-box choices or sexuality. 7. The lessons of 'Mean Streets', if we can put it that way, have been learnt by film-makers as diverse as Kathryn Bigelow (especially in 'Near Dark' and 'Point Break') Gus Van Sant, Abel Ferrara, and too-numerous examples in the new queer and black cinemas... and, of course, by Quentin Tarantino.



By Geoffrey Nowell-Smith

The word is out. Federico Fellini is the directors' director par excellence, topping the recent Sight and Sound directors' poll by a short head from Orson Welles. And it's not hard to see why film-makers should like his work. No commercial film director makes films with such freedom, or such a sense of freedom even when working under constraint. Fellini is therefore above all enviable – enviable because he can go and make a film like 8½ without a script or budget, but enviable also because he seems to have gifts of expressivity and selfexpression that emerge regardless of circumstance and with such directness that invention seems to flow spontaneously into realisation. Not only do Fellini's films stem from himself in this apparently unmediated way, but he also makes them about himself and appears in them as himself. And finally, he makes films about film-making (which in his case is not unconnected to making films about himself). These are not necessarily the best or the most realistic films made about the cinema, but they have a unique brilliance as films about creativity - what makes it flow and what, materially or psychologically, holds it up.

One thing that holds up creativity in the cinema is critics. That is why the critic Daumier in 8½ has to be got rid of. And it is also perhaps why Fellini no longer appears among the top ten in Sight and Sound's parallel critics' poll. Critics are, or have become, suspicious of creativity and of the ideology of the artist and self-expression inherited from Romanticism. They are happy for artists to be naive, or ironic, or to have internalised their own critical superego,

but the sheer splurge of self-expression which seems to mark Fellini's work is no longer fashionable. Fellini started to go out of fashion in the 70s, a time of modernist rigour and resolute anti-sentimentality. Godard was at his most arid, but was still preferred to Truffaut; Antonioni made few films but was admired (though excoriated in the United States for the embarrassingly perceptive Zabriskie Point). Fellini churned them out but to critical neglect. Only the enduring popularity of 8½ (much loved in spite of the fate of the unfortunate Daumier) enabled the director Fellini to scrape into the critics' top ten in 1982.

Personally, I have always had difficulties in appreciating Fellini. I admire his invention, his mastery of expressive detail. I find the films often charming, but the charm can easily pall, and the very fact that the films work by charm seems to me suspect. It has always been a great strength of the movies that they are enjoyable



in an impersonal way: directors can be distinctive but are rarely obtrusive in the way certain writers – and even more, certain television 'personalities' – are obtrusive. Fellini breaks the tacit compact, deep-rooted in popular cinema, that while directors may be admired for what they do, it is only the characters on screen (and the actors who play them) who are loved or hated for who they are.

Of course there are other examples of obtrusive directors in popular cinema. They tend to be performers who have taken to direction (like Chaplin), or directors who appear in their own movies (like Hitchcock), or unclassifiable figures like Welles. And as these examples suggest, they also tend to be cases on the messy borderline between commercial cinema and cinema as art. A sense of directorial presence is often taken (rightly or wrongly) to signify that a film belongs on the 'art' side of the divide, and what is generally called art cinema contains plenty of examples of films in which a directorial personality is sprawled large upon the celluloid. So should we just accept that Fellini is one of those directors who is allowed to obtrude because he operates in a genre where an opposite compact applies and being obtrusive is part of the game? Certainly attempts have been made to define art cinema as a genre, and directorial obtrusiveness - along with plots that go nowhere and alienated heroes – could be listed as a determining characteristic of such a genre.

Such a conclusion seems to me doubly suspect. First, art cinema cannot be distinguished in an abstract and systematic way from the rest of cinema, and second, even if it could, any division that separated art and popular cinema and put Fellini on the side of art would do him



and his art - a grave injustice. The idea of an endemic conflict in cinema between something called art and something else called commerce or industry or entertainment or popular culture is almost as old as cinema itself. But the conflict has taken so many forms and been so over-determined by other questions, and the terms of the opposition have varied so much over time, that one has to ask whether one is really dealing with the same conflict? Art cinema nowadays tends to mean unpopular films in foreign languages (probably state-subsidised) that have been subtitled in English, whether to preserve artistic integrity or because the market is not large enough to justify the cost of dubbing. But this minority and anti-popular emphasis is not present in the notion of film art in the early years of cinema, nor could it have been what Chaplin, Pickford and Fairbanks had in mind when they founded United Artists: as the most popular artists of their generation they simply wanted more control over their product and its marketing; opposing the popular was not part of their aim.

Italian cinema has been a particular victim of the equivocation about the meaning of art cinema. Post-war Italian films were all popular in intention, aimed at a mass audience and distributed on the commercial circuit. Some were popular at the box office, some not – but the same could be said of Hollywood films today. The equivocation began because neo-realist films in particular became popular on the arthouse circuits abroad, while enjoying mixed fortunes at home. Some, like Rossellini's Roma città aperta (Rome, Open City), were enormously successful both domestically and abroad, particularly in the US. But Visconti's La terra trema,



which could indeed be classified as an art film and was revered by the critics, didn't even get a circuit release in Italy in its original form, since the distributors calculated that a three-hour epic without name actors and spoken in dialect was unlikely to find favour with a public accustomed to stars and dubbing into standard Italian. As if to prove their point, Giuseppe De Santis' Riso amaro (Bitter Rice), a proletarian drama starring Raf Vallone and the fleshy newcomer Silvana Mangano, did hugely well while being sniffed at by the critics. And De Sica's Umberto D was a box-office disaster whose failure with the mass audience signalled the end of neo-realism as a movement.

Federico Fellini started his directing career just as the star of neo-realism was beginning to wane. He was a journalist, caricaturist and scriptwriter, from a middle-class provincial background. Unlike Visconti, with his connections to the Parisian artistic beau monde on the one side and the Communist Party on the other, Fellini was ordinary. He grew up under ordinary fascism, Italian-style, a world of petty pomp and regimented mediocrity from which there was only one escape - to go to the movies. The movies were not fascist. Newsreels were, of course, but the feature-film industry, though protected economically, was very little interfered with culturally or politically. The main thing Italian feature films had to do was compete with Hollywood, which had generously agreed to limit its imports into Italy to 250 films per year, or five per week.

Fellini's is not the only testimony to the liberatory power of American movies and popular culture in general in a country whose own official culture had been bled of most of its vital strength. Nor was he the only person to experience political liberation in 1944/5 as an opportunity to heal a cultural split between oppressive reality and liberatory fantasy. But whereas many of his contemporaries, around 1945, turned to the native realist tradition for inspiration (and also to the American novel and to various models of European modernism), Fellini showed little interest in either realism or high culture. His difference from his contemporaries was not immediately apparent (except perhaps in his relative reluctance to sign any political petition from the 'world of culture' that happened to be going the rounds). It emerged gradually.

Unlike De Sica, who had fought a principled battle not to have an American actor ▶



◀ imposed in the role of the hero of Ladri di biciclette (Bicycle Thieves), Fellini happily took on Anthony Quinn for La strada in 1954 and Broderick Crawford and Richard Basehart for Il bidone in 1955. He also showed an increasing penchant for caricature and the grotesque, particularly in his portrayal of women. It would be wrong to say that all Fellini's women are caricatures and nothing but. The roles played by Giulietta Masina (Fellini's wife) are gentle caricatures but also character roles. But most of the women who inhabit Fellini's films are fantasms. They are not rounded characters and their creation is very unliterary. It is hard to imagine any actress taking home the script, studying the role and coming back on the set with an interpretation of the character. Rather, the character seems to stem Athena-like from the director's head, in a form that is at the same time extremely personal and extremely stereotypical.

The sources of Fellini's imagery are not hard to find. Of course they are in his head, in the sense of being an activation of his own fantasy, but they are also deeply embedded in popular culture and popular memory. His adolescent and pre-adolescent dreams of women are not unique – though he is uniquely good at reworking them and giving them form. And the forms into which these fantasies are poured are those of caricature, cartoons, comic books, variety shows and school-book illustration: what is Fellini's *Satyricon* if not a remembered image of fourth-form Roman history, over which priapic dwarfs and other grotesques have been scrawled like graffiti?

The forms with which Fellini has chosen to work are not large-scale narrative forms. Fellini is a sketchwriter or raconteur; he is not an architect of all-embracing narratives. Lo sceicco

bianco (The White Sheik, 1951), his first film as sole director, is practically the only one to have anything like a classical, three-act play construction. And by narrative criteria, La dolce vita (1960) is aimless and seemingly endless (though this never stopped it from being hugely popular). From 8½ onwards, Fellini is able to turn this weakness to advantage, abandoning all pretence of the novelistic and the omniscient narrator and casting himself instead in the equally traditional but less orthodox roles of compere, presenter or ringmaster, or even of the storyteller who has forgotten the story.

The forms on which Fellini draws and to which he remains attached are also for the most part regressive. The film which Guido cannot make in 8½ is science fiction, modern and geared to the future. Instead, Guido turns back to the past and assembles his memories. Fellini has a decided antipathy towards television, but loves and has frequently evoked the fading or marginal worlds of photo-romances, travelling variety and circus. Movies, particularly Hollywood, were a powerful influence in his early formation, but not only does he take nothing from them in terms of narrative construction, he also makes little positive use of them as an icon of modernity. They are evoked instead as faded remembered images, like the lost world of Ginger and Fred: remnants of a time before mass culture in the form of television swept across Italy in a vast homogenising wave.

The pull exerted on Fellini by the past can be seen as a nostalgia for childhood or adolescence, a time when reality may have been oppressive but dreams were free. But it can also be seen as a nostalgia for a popular culture which was that of a collectivity – the parade, the *festa*, the coming of the circus, the movies, even the comic books or risqué novels that

were passed from hand to hand. Such a notion of culture as community located in the past is always mythical: look at John Ford's Westerns. But it is powerful and it accounts, I think, for much of Fellini's popularity with many types of audience.

Here is a director whose work has many of the trappings, one might think, of modernism or even post-modernism - disjointed and heroless narratives, the foregrounding of the cinematic apparatus, play with illusion, Chinesebox construction. But these devices are a mere shadow-play. They have a serious look to them, but they hold no terror. There is none of the anguish of modernity such as one finds in Rivette, Godard, Wenders or Antonioni. On the contrary, they are almost reassuring: their function is to say to the audience, "You know, and I know, that the lost world is lost, but somehow we will get back there: Guido will get his story together; Marcello will find his angel even if he cannot talk with her." And what of the lost world? It is basically a good world, not because nothing particularly awful happens in it (though nothing much does, apart from the death of Gelsomina in La strada), but rather because it is composed of good images, images drawn from all those good things that the ordinary world used to be full of but which are fast disappearing from our culture.

What is at issue here is not so much Fellini's nostalgia as ours. Not all Fellini's films are nostalgic, but enough of them are for his entire oeuvre to be readable (and sometimes misreadable) in a nostalgic key. Prova d'orchestra (1978) is not a nostalgic film, nor were films like La strada at the time of their release. But the continuing appeal of Fellini's films relies at least in part on a desire to go back from now to then and from the experience of now to the memory of then. Embracing Fellini's world is also a way of embracing something rooted and regional – almost all his work rotates on an axis from Rimini to Rome – and of turning away from the levelling aspects of modernity.

When Ginger e Fred (Ginger and Fred, 1986) was shown on Italian television recently alarm bells were rung in the newspapers because the ratings for it, though respectable, were lower than for an American-style television show on one of the other channels. To the correspondent of La Repubblica it seemed like the beginning of the end for a popular and national culture. I think the alarm was exaggerated – if only because the audience that watched Ginger and Fred will at least remember it, whereas the other show will disappear into the realm of the forgotten until a future Fellini emerges to rescue it and reinsert it into memory.

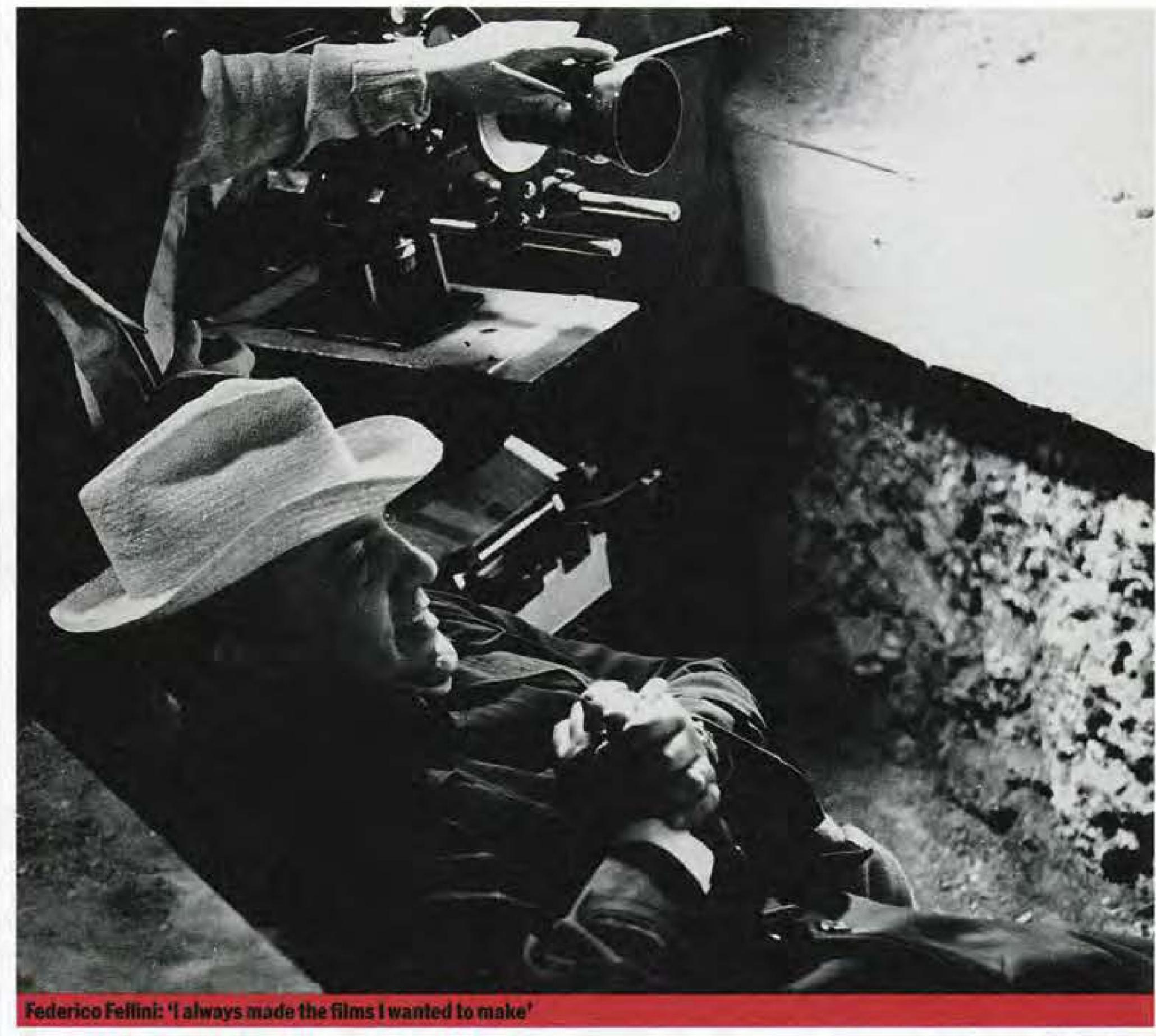
What has been said here does not perhaps do full justice to all Fellini's work – and particularly not to remarkable films like *E la nave va* (1983), whose autonomy of invention escapes the simple schemas I have drawn to account for the director's appeal. Every great artist's work has several lives, interspersed with periods of near-death. But I would be willing to bet that in 2002 Federico Fellini will still be in the charts – for film-makers, critics and the general public alike – though possibly for different films and certainly for different reasons.

Fellini talks about his career, the Marx Brothers and tears. By Anna Muzzarelli

FELLINI IN CONVERSATION

Anna Muzzarelli: In your list of films for the 'Sight and Sound' top ten, you commented that you had selected 'popular' films, because that is the culture you belong to.

Federico Fellini: Cinema doesn't belong only to the great directors; it has other participants who are equally emblematic. I can't help but think of those films from the 20s onwards that had as their primary symbol an actress or actor - in those days, cinema for me was the faces of actors. Garbo's fascination had something judicial about it: an admonition, a mask, a gaze; a hieratic, mortuary attitude, as if a sentence was being passed. In the Italy of the Catholic Church, it was impossible not to be fascinated by a judge, and a woman judge at that - a sort of spectral Athena. So this company of faces that represented the cinema included Garbo, then Chaplin, or the two together - Garbo the sorceress, the Pythia, and Charlie the tramp, the young rebel, the two of them representing the most contrasting psychologies and desires. Then there was Stan and Ollie - how grateful we were for that carefree laughter with no purpose behind it, none of the emotional or ideological blackmail of Chaplin. And to conclude, there were the Marx Brothers. Only the other night I came down to the kitchen to fetch a glass of water and the television set was on, and they were showing Duck Soup. I found myself sitting there alone, at 2.30am, wiping tears of laughter from my face with my dressing-gown sleeve. What divine buffoons, what rhythm, what rapid-fire dialogue, the grace of a ballet: three magnificent clowns inserted into the game of the others. To sum up then: Garbo, Chaplin by her side, Stan and Ollie on the other side, and the Marx Brothers dancing round them, incessantly. Tell us about your taste for caricature, the cartoonlike character that is so present in your work. If Italy survived the gloom of bourgeois education under those twin castrating authorities - fascism and the Catholic Church - it was thanks to American cinema. American cinema was the great nourishment, it was another life. But even before their cinema, Americans had gained great popularity through their comic strips. An Italian magazine, the Corriere dei Piccoli, carried the work of these cartoonists - great artists not only in a graphic sense, but in a literary one as well, because American literature is represented not only by the works of Steinbeck or Faulkner, but by Jiggs and Maggie, Hans and Fritz Katzenjammer, characters who became very popular in Italy. They gave us a feeling of gratitude towards America that helped us to bear the cultural blackmail of the times. Was this what led you to become a cartoonist?



As a boy I used to spend hours trying to copy those drawings. I always had a tendency to scribble on any white surface - it's a habit I have maintained when I prepare a film, and since I don't have cinematheque memories of the great classics, a film first appears to me through the sketches I make. These enable me to grasp a perspective, the spaces of a setting or the costumes, what face a character should have – indeed, when I start to prepare a new film the first approach is graphic. It's also a way of telling myself that I'm working, that the whole shebang is on the rails. During my first years in Rome I also worked as a caricaturist, to make ends meet: I would go into restaurants and cheekily ask if anyone wanted a caricature.

After making 'La dolce vita' there is a two-year interval before the production of '8½', a period during which, it is said, it seemed you were going through an expressive crisis.

One should always wish for an expressive crisis, how can you do without it? '8½', then, is the product of this crisis, almost as if it was the only film you could make? What gave you the idea of making a film about making films? It's difficult enough to remember the films I have made, the motifs even... Anyway, for some time I had had in mind the idea of making the portrait of a man in its many layers: his memories, fantasies, dreams, his everyday life, a character who as yet had no professional or personal identity (at the beginning he wasn't a film director). I wanted to recount the multi-dimensionality of a day, a conscious and an unconscious life unfolding like a spiral, without defining boundaries, abandoning any idea of plot in favour of a free narration, a chat. The idea was to restore the sense of a time where past, present and future, dreams, memories and desires were blended together.

It was a very ambitious project, so much so that I couldn't express it. Then I went to Chianciano, a spa town, to take a cure, and this environment – its ritual queuing with a glass waiting for health to be restored, the grandiosity of the spa, the purgatorial sense which is always present when a collective of people are united in the same ritual, like a ballet – this brought to me the background for these meditations: a man caught in a moment of suspension in his daily rhythms, there because there is a threat, perhaps an illness.

But I didn't know my character. I had thought of a writer, a lawyer, a journalist: I couldn't make up my mind, and these memories, these meditations without a face were fading into nothing. Perhaps this was the great lesson of 8½: at some point I told myself, "get the engine started, get everybody on board, somebody will provide, force other people to make you do something." So I did. I started the construction of the set, put the actors under contract, and the film took off. In the beginning I didn't have a script, only some notes, a scene or two written with Tullio Pinelli and Ennio Flaiano, and my inexhaustible, endless chattering about what I wanted to do. We started to build the scenery of the farmhouse, and after two months of intense work I realised that I didn't know what I wanted. I would go every day to the studios and spend all day in my office, drawing, making calls, but the film was no longer there.

One day I sat at the typewriter and started a letter to the producer: "Dear Rizzoli, this letter will probably interrupt a professional relationship, besides a beautiful friendship; I am sorry you have taken on commitments

◀ to make this film, but I must ask you to suspend everything." While I was writing this letter I heard someone calling me from the set, downstairs; Gasparino, a grip, was inviting me to join a little party in the theatre, where another worker, Bocio, was celebrating his 60th birthday. I left my letter and followed Gasparino down to the set where everybody was gathered and Bocio was pouring wine into paper glasses. I took a glass, wished him happy birthday, and Bocio said, "this film will be wonderful." I felt a traitor, a captain abandoning his crew; I thanked Bocio and instead of going back to my letter went into the garden. I sat on a bench and thought, "I'm a director who doesn't remember what he wanted to do" - and in that moment the film was made: "That's what I'll do. The story of a director who doesn't remember his own film."

A few days later the film laboratories went on strike and everybody wanted to stop shooting since it was impossible to check the rushes, but I said, "No, we'll go ahead." I shot for four months without ever seeing what I'd done, ordering the demolition of expensive constructions to make room for new ones, laying off actors who had finished their part; the cameraman had a nervous breakdown. When shooting was over I spent three days in the projection room to see the work of four months; it was a historical undertaking, that of someone who shoots a film without knowing what he's doing.

The film was born in a spirit of abandonment, of spontaneity, of trust and defiance, a fortunate film that was later so successful as to become a genre – alongside the Western and the detective film, there is the 8½ genre. If there's a lesson I learnt from this experience, it's that everything that happens during the production of a film, be it contradictory, adverse, interruptions, strikes, can all become nourishment for the film. Weren't you ever worried?

Fear of disaster is very stimulating for me; I adore wrecks, the threat of the end, an end seen as a sign of a new beginning. I don't look for disasters, but I need this threatening atmosphere. The secret of my creativity is very simple: I sign a contract and take an advance, which I know I will never give back, and the threat of ending up in jail or of being totally discredited is the incentive to make a film. Probably I identify with the Renaissance artist who takes a commission from the pope or the prince and if he fails to deliver will be sent to prison or worse.

Which would you prefer, a film that made a lot of money at the box office but wasn't much praised by the critics, or a film that didn't do so well in terms of returns, but was highly critically acclaimed?

Money?... I don't want to appear disinterested or angelic, but I don't really care. I don't think about the result when I make a film, neither the critics' enthusiasm nor the box-office returns – one makes films for oneself, because you have to, apart from that little detail of a contract and an advance. Of course I'm satisfied if the film pleases the most demanding critics while at the same time meeting the favour of audiences. Certainly it's



a goal which is there at the back of my mind, though it's never really present when I work. I don't think anyone in this profession should have any other concern than his ability to be a medium for what he wants to do: those characters, those situations, that confused sentiment between nostalgia, regret, prediction, this undefinable atmosphere which is the oxygen that gives life to colours and characters. That is the only reference point for someone who tries to transform a dream into something concrete and tangible. Would you say you have roots in neo-realism – and I'm thinking of your collaboration with Rossellini as a screenwriter for 'Paisà' and 'Roma città aperta'? Rossellini stands out from the rest of the socalled neo-realists for his eye, his intervention as a strong and compassionate witness who knew how to photograph the air around things, and for his disregard of cinema as a spectacle. I took part as a spectator in Paisà and Roma città aperta and I may have learnt my way of approaching cinema from Rossellini, who worked in the most incredible confusion: expiring bills, romantic complications, conflicts, the war. I remember in Naples, during the shooting of Paisà, in the middle of the street, with the allies' tanks parading behind our backs, and there he was, with his beret and the megaphone: the casualness of a god who's creating an earthquake only to be able to photograph it. This is the true lesson that neo-realism taught me. 'La dolce vita' was an enormous success not just in Italy, but in Europe and the US. Did you think at the time that you were making films for an international audience?

No, I don't think so – if I had planned my films in those terms, how could I have made *Amarcord?* I believe that if one has a sincere, authentic and non-speculative vocation to express oneself through painting, literature, music or cinema, one cannot have other concerns than those of sincerity and expressivenesss. I always made the films I wanted to make.

I remember that as a boy I didn't know what I wanted to do in life. All my classmates had specific ideas – they wanted to become doctors or lawyers – but I wanted to be a painter, a cartoonist, a journalist, an actor, and in the end I chose a profession that is all these things together. When I'm on the set I'm there 100 per cent. I'm a nuisance: I'm

a carpenter, a tailor, an electrician, I hang pictures on the walls, I put make-up on or advise the make-up artist how to emphasise the expression of a face so it is expressed with more immediacy, more authority. Do you think you owe something to that Italian popular tradition that inspired Toto's great art? If you are referring to the commedia dell'arte, that mixture of tradition and improvisation, that taking advantage of every situation suggested by the audience or by the bad temper of an actress, I certainly do. Everything I said about Stan and Ollie or the Marx Brothers I can repeat with the same enthusiasm about Totò, with an addition though - the disquieting trait he had of being a messenger from the afterlife, something profoundly Neapolitan, ghostly, a sardonic grin in the face of disaster.

I met Totò for the first time in 1938 when I was working as a journalist in Rome. I had seen him at the theatre and he had moved me, so pretending to be Fred MacMurray, my hat on the back of my head and a pencil behind my ear, I went to his dressing room to interview him. A week later I returned to show him the article and a caricature I had made of him. I worked with him only once, 20 years later on the last day of shooting a film by Rossellini, *Dov'è la Libertà?*. Roberto was ill and the production asked me to finish the film. Everybody called him "Prince", and he was a prince, so I did too. "You," he said, "can call me Antonio." It was like a pontifical investiture.

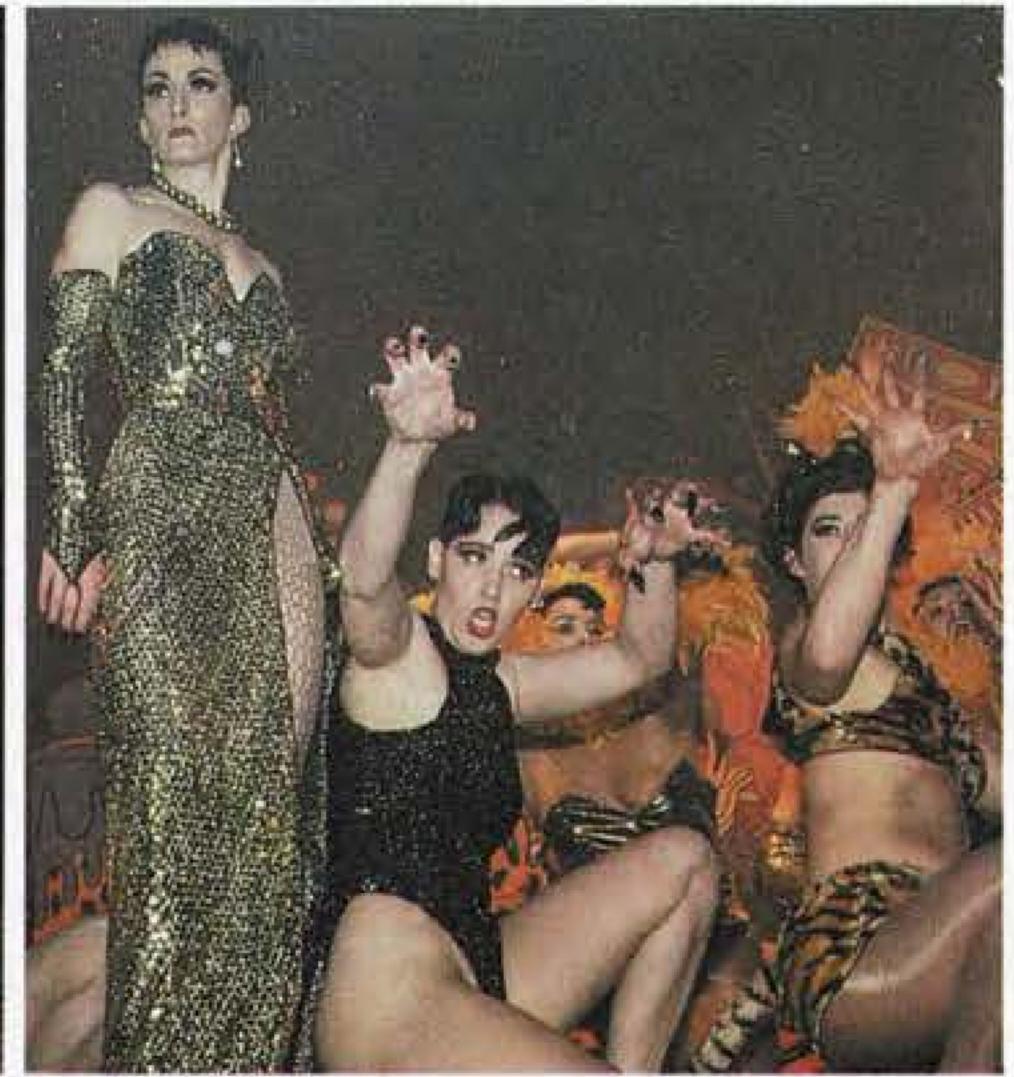
Many years later I met him again, I believe when I was making 81 at the Scalera studios. He was almost blind, wearing black sunglasses, and during the break a Neapolitan colleague, Donzelli, took him to that same garden where I had sat down to think about my film. Totò was sitting in the sun, like a little lizard, and I was moved to tears at the sight of this small, emaciated man warming himself in the sun. I approached them and asked Donzelli about Totò's health; he replied that he had lost his sight completely. At the end of the break they went back to the set. I followed them inside, and stood in a corner to watch. The director gave Totò a few instructions on the scene to be shot, somebody took off his sunglasses and put a bowler hat on his head, some of the actors informed him of their positions, the clapper went, and... a miracle. He moved about with the speed of someone who had 100 eyes, even behind his head: he delivered his lines, moved to his spots and when the director said stop, he stopped.

Do you know the story of Pinocchio?

When Pinocchio comes into the theatre and Harlequin asks, "Who is over there, is that Pinocchio?", and all the marionettes recognise him and Pinocchio jumps on the stage and dances with them? I would be in exactly the same situation if Totò said to me, "Ohè, Federì!" It seems to me that I have always had a feeling of belonging to a brigade of comic types, and I say this without any romantic or literary complacency: it is my most intimate quality, my inner identity, that of someone who makes spectacle, even during interviews, as you have probably noticed.

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Alison Maclean, director of 'Crush', talks to Lizzie Francke about femmes fatales, divine feuds – and New Zealand

DAR SIDE

New Zealand director Alison Maclean's debut feature opens with the most primeaval of images: a pool of rust, resembling almost blood-coloured sludge, simmers away as the earth heaves with volcanic activity. Suggestively slippery and festering, the opening sequence of Crush sucks the audience into a doom-laden world of muddy and inchoate feelings. These are churned over in the film when an American comes to Rotorua, a New Zealand resort town famous for its geo-thermal hot spots, and finds herself spelling trouble for those around her. Starting out like an affable road movie with two best friends driving through a moss-lined landscape sealed by a heavy-lidded sky, the film skids out of control when the reckless outsider Lane crashes the car and then abandons her comatose pal, Christina, for dead. Cracking open a Pandora's Box of infectious passions, Crush deals with the panicky horror of guilt and revenge unleashed by this careless act. For as Christina lies in a coma, Lane invades her life and creates havoc.

Maclean is the latest of a new generation of women directors from Australasia marked by similarly skewed visions of the world, particularly when it comes to the traditional female preoccupations of family and friends. The first film in the new wave was Ann Turner's Celia (1988), a gothic tale of childhood in which the small heroine confuses reality and her dream world with frightening results. The next year saw Jane Campion's bitter Sweetie which undid the ties that bind with its story of "a bit mental" (to quote the film) young woman who plants herself back in her sister's life. These are films that eschew the positive imagism of recent women's cinema for a much darker exploration of female experience. Crush could be described as an off-kilter horror film - one that allows for a psychological gouging rather than relying on excessive gore. But more importantly, it is an unsettling and disorienting story that is conspicuously uncosy about female relationships in its attempt to achieve an emotional truth.

"In recent years there haven't been enough films that look at the murky side of women's friendships, it's like some feminist taboo born out of the 'Sisterhood is powerful' idea," explains Maclean. "The cruelty, the jealousy, the competitiveness, the depth of those feelings at times, they just haven't been dealt with." Admittedly Hollywood has had its pot shot with Barbet Schroeder's Single White Female. "I read the script for that film and thought that it was interesting when the room-mate first moves in and gradually starts to encroach on the other woman's territory. I've been in situations like that, where it feels like it is just too close for comfort but at the same time one wants that intimacy. That's what is really disturbing in that story, not the blood bath in the end which is really quite obvious."

Maclean, however, is not afraid of the visceral. She could even be described as having made a habit of dredging the emotional mire to find the most unpleasant things available. Her attention-grabbing short Kitchen Sink, made in 1989, is an exorcism of desire and a freaky reworking of the Pygmalion myth couched in the most banal and grungy of domestic chores. As a young woman cleans her sink, she pulls a thick black hair up through the plug hole which proves to be some bizarre umbilical cord with a hirsute homunculus attached to the end. It is hers to breathe life into and to fashion into a demon lover who subsequently proves to have a mind of his own. The film is a rehearsal for Crush as both works investigate relationships that are based on a perceived imbalance of power. There is no clear-cut division between victim and victor in Kitchen Sink. And the same equivocal relationship exists between Christina and Lane in Crush.

Maclean pushes the ambiguities in Crush, and nowhere more so than with the character of Lane. "One should have profoundly ambivalent feelings about her. She's like Pabst's Lulu: you are appalled by some of her actions, yet there is also an innocence about her. It is important that the audience should never quite know where they are with her, not quite know her limits." With her dark vampish bob and provocative stance, Lane is a latter-day femme fatale. But Maclean argues that she investigates that Hollywood archetype rather than reproducing it. Lane is framed by other women's perceptions, whether those of Christina or of Angela, the gauche and seemingly impressionable daughter of Colin, a writer whom Lane encounters. "The femme fatale is traditionally

someone whose sexuality is dangerous, but always as perceived by men. In *Crush*, though Lane has an affair with Colin, there is a sense that she is using him to work out certain things about Christina. It is much more to do with the relationship between these two women than with the man."

Typically, in a climate that still has certain prescriptions about what women directors should be up to, Maclean has come under fire from some for not clarifying exactly what that relationship might be. "I've been asked whether they are lovers but I don't want to spell that out, and I've been told that that's a copout. But for me it's exciting to be in a film where you're not sure exactly where you stand. Once you say that they were lovers, you close as many doors as you open. I think it's far more interesting when you are not sure, you are guessing and thinking about it as you watch it. That's what it's like when you meet people in life, the ins and outs of what they are and what their history is. Also, to delineate that relationship would be to deny the more allegorical nature of the film. Lane and Christina are not really fully rounded psychological characters - they come out of nowhere, like an angel and a devil locked in a tussle."

This divine feud is played out in 'God's own country', as New Zealand is still quaintly called. But for Maclean New Zealand is no paradise, and *Crush* is as much an ironical comment on a repressed and conservative Anglo-Saxon culture. "There is a lot of passion and violence in the country, but it is kept buried, particularly the violence which tends to come out only when people get drunk or in certain ritualised ways such as in sport. It's such a buttoned-down country, but one that is also deeply insecure about its identity." That is where the fatal crush comes in, since such an insecurity allows it to succumb easily to the charms of another.

In Maclean's film, the brash American Lane becomes an obvious object of others' infatuation in such a way that the film can almost be read as an allegory of New Zealand's relationship with the US. "Crushes are very intense and often short lived, which means that they can flip the other way round and soon turn into total scorn. New Zealand is constantly borrowing from American culture but at the same



Exiles and lovers: Marcia Gay Harden as Lane, the unsettling woman with whom the world is infatuated in Maclean's debut feature

time there is a complete rejection of it in the rather self-conscious nationalism. The attitude is that we're better than the nasty, corrupt and evil States, yet we can't help being fascinated by the country." Setting *Crush* in the spa resort of Rotorua gives it a further twist. "In one way it is very much a tourist town – the big, wide streets are lined with half-empty international hotels, but it is also a very important Maori area, with a very strong identity. It is quite a spiritual place, but yet as a *pakeha* [the indigenous term for white New Zealanders] you are an outsider, forced into the role of sightseer along with everyone else." *Crush* sheds new light on that particular cultural displacement.

Maclean creates a distinct sense of place, yet also makes it seem very unworldly. But then Rotorua's seething landscape is a god-sent backdrop for a grotesque melodrama. The brooding mood is further exacerbated by the grey, sunless weather. "I decided to create a wintry look partly because it makes the steam show much more and partly because it makes the colour very saturated. The colours are from the town – dull greens and browns, sulphurous yellows." The style could be described as drab 70s, but Maclean maintains that audiences shouldn't be sure what period they are in. "There should be the sense that you are one step removed from everything, so that you are not quite sure what you feel about it. New Zealand has that kind of ambience, it's a little bit stuck in the past."

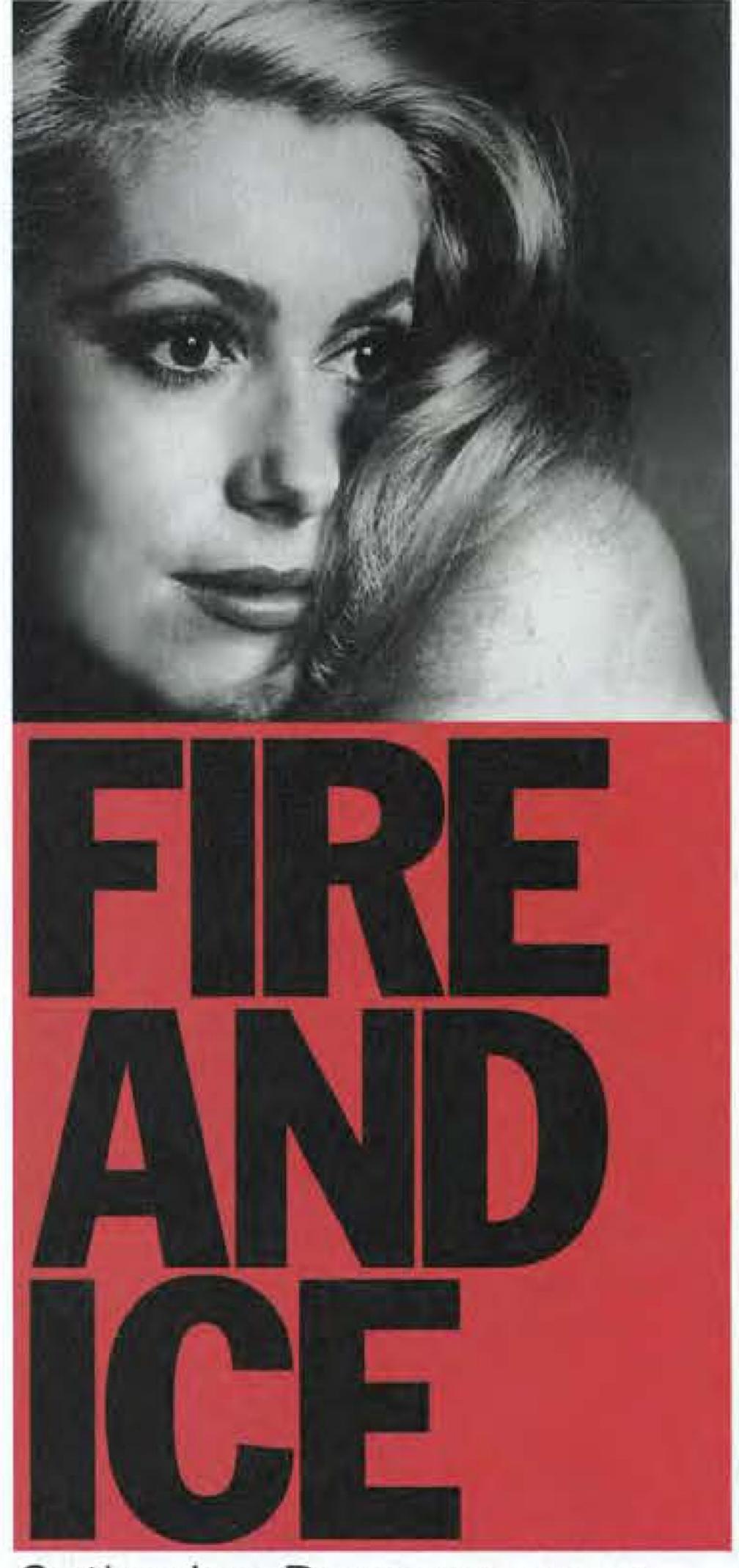
As a film-maker developing her craft in New Zealand, Maclean is conscious of being isolated from any particular cinematic tradition. She trained as a sculptor and photographer – there

are no film schools in New Zealand - and her interest in cinema developed out of reading around issues of visual representation. She made her first short film, provocatively titled Taunt, as an experiment with the subjective camera. "It was about a man chasing a woman - but they were both played by the same actor, a Maori guy who had very long hair. I was totally into Screen at the time and wanted to play with the idea of a female and male point of view. I would read a lot of film theory, but it's a bizarre idea to feel influenced by a film that you haven't seen. It happens a lot out here since you just don't get the opportunity to view them. I would read about some and they would have a tremendous allure, often in ways that they couldn't possibly live up to. I remember when I finally saw Riddles of the Sphinx it didn't do a lot for me, but on paper it seemed very profound and exciting."

Film-makers whose work Maclean did have access to and whom she feels markedly influenced by include the mother of the avantgarde, Maya Deren – and certainly the chillingly nightmarish texture of *Meshes of the Afternoon* finds its way into *Crush*. Among her contemporaries, Maclean has called on the experience and advice of Jane Campion. "She has been an important influence, not so much because of her films – which of course I admire and respect – but more because I see what she is doing and her courage as an example."

Maclean finds she is asked a lot about the Australasian new female wave and that it is a phenomenon she can't easily account for. But her own experience points to the importance of a flexible film-funding commission (the New Zealand and Australian film commissions have been behind the films of Campion et al) which has shown a consistent interest in her work and was willing to back her feature regardless. "It's government money, so there isn't the same commercial imperative. They wanted to support me as a film-maker and they were willing to go with what I presented to them, even if they did have certain reservations and weren't too sure what they were going to end up with." It was leap a of faith that allowed Maclean to plunge into the dark.

'Crush' opens on 19 March and is reviewed on page 44 of this issue



Catherine Deneuve may signal French chic and 'perverse' sexuality to audiences worldwide. But what does her career reveal about the role of the female star in the cinema and culture of France? By Ginette Vincendeau

In French town halls, two icons, one male and one female, symbolise the nation state. One is a photograph of the president, gazing down in a benignly patriarchal, or as the French might put it, avuncular, way (François Mitterrand is often referred to as 'tonton'). The other is a plaster bust of Marianne, the symbol of the French Republic. But whereas the president's identity is self-evident, French mayors have a choice when it comes to Marianne. They can order, among others, the 'traditional' version, a Brigitte Bardot model, or, since October 1985, the Catherine Deneuve model (FF2,908.94 plus tax).

The recent release of Indochine, directed by Régis Wargnier, looks set to bring back Deneuve as the top female French star of our time (the film has already won a Golden Globe award and received two Oscar nominations for best foreign film and for Deneuve as best actress). This is noteworthy, because though Deneuve has received many prizes and her star image has shone for three decades, allowing her to command one of the highest salaries for a star in France, her film parts since Truffaut's Le Dernier métro (1980) have tended to be acts of symbolic presence rather than actual leads, a little like Marianne in the town halls. This discrepancy between her status and the roles she plays brings up interesting questions about the make-up of Deneuve's star image and the place of women within the French star system.

For an international art-cinema audience, Catherine Deneuve is likely to evoke two things: French chic and 'perverse' sexuality. The first derives from the association of her beauty with prestigious French fashion houses; the second from her performances as the angelfaced schizophrenic murderer of Polanski's Repulsion (1965) and as Séverine, the shy bourgeois wife of Buñuel's Belle de jour (1967) who spends her afternoons as a prostitute in a discreet and luxurious Parisian brothel.

For French audiences, Deneuve set out in a different mode. After a few small parts with her sister Françoise Dorléac in light comedies such as Les Collégiennes (1956, at the age of 14) and Les Portes claquent (1960), she began her career proper as Virtue in Vadim's Le Vice et la vertu (1960, based on a novel by the Marquis de Sade), in which her bouffant hairstyle reflected Vadim's attempt to clone her, after Annette Stroyberg and before Jane Fonda, on Bardot.

But Deneuve did not pursue the libertine line for long, and her real breakthrough came with a better hairstyle in a better film: Les Parapluies de Cherbourg (1964), the first of Jacques Demy's sentimental, pastel-coloured musicals with all-sung dialogue. So while internationally Deneuve is associated with Polanski and Buñuel, at home she has paid tribute to the pivotal role of Demy in establishing her career. Against the background of the still repressive sexual mores of early 60s France, while Bardot continued her role as explicit sex goddess and dark-haired New Wave actors such as Anouk Aimée, Anna Karina and Jeanne Moreau embodied 'intellectual' versions of French femininity, Deneuve triumphed as a sexy but innocent blonde, a persona reinforced by two further Demy films, the musical Les Demoiselles

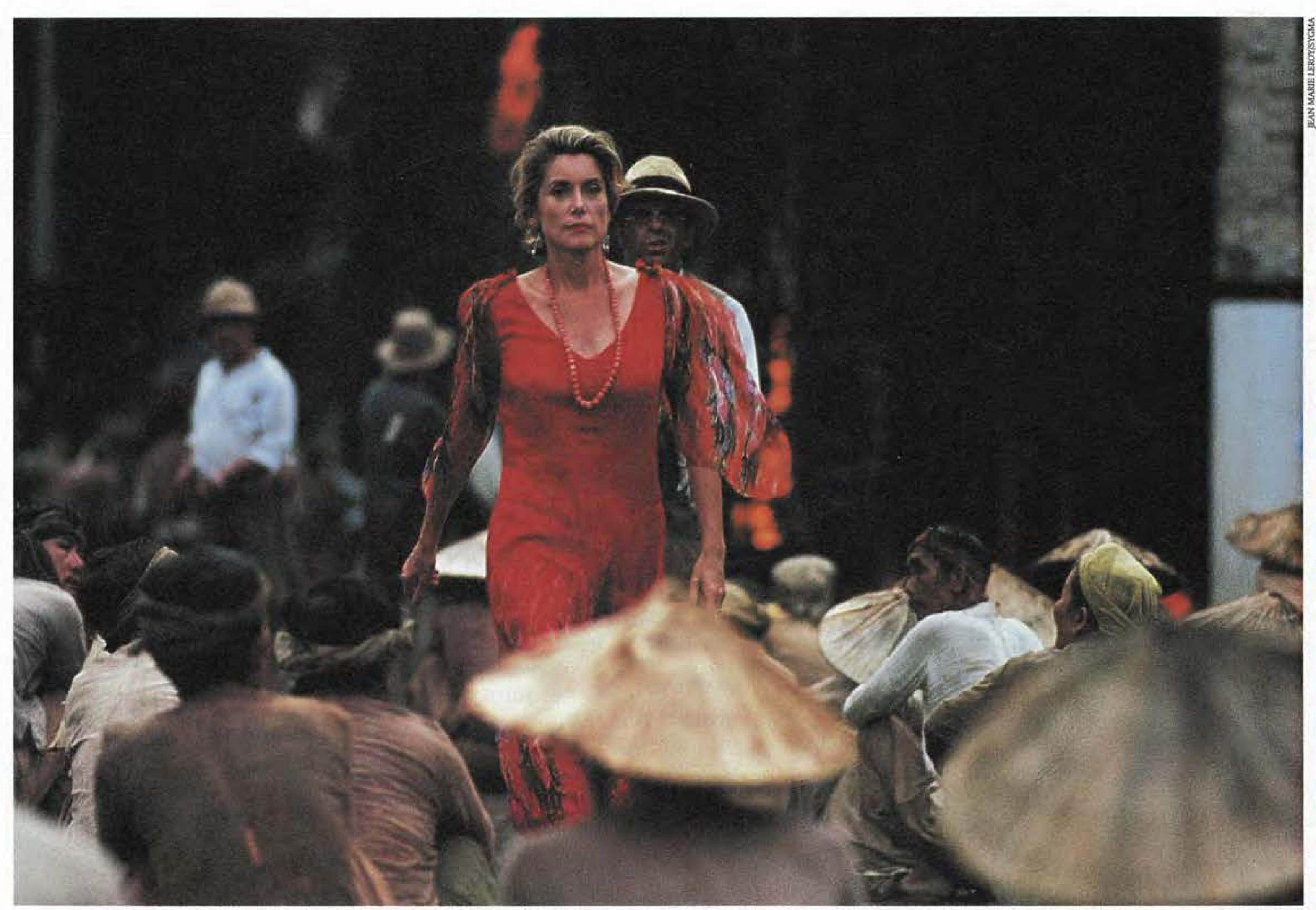
de Rochefort (1966) and the costume fairy tale Peau d'Ane (1970) as well as by several light comedies such as La Vie de château (directed by Jean-Paul Rappeneau in 1965).

Messing up her hair

The construction and perception of women's personalities always depend on their looks. And in the case of Deneuve, those looks are defined as much by grooming as by any physical attributes. Her hairstyles, for instance, have consistently been seen as an intrinsic feature of her persona and many writers have talked about changing her image in terms of messing up her hair. Like her hairstyle in Les Parapluies de Cherbourg (smoothed back in a neat half ponytail), Deneuve's image in the film is one of smoothness and restraint, a well-behaved middle-class girl (even if in the narrative she becomes pregnant out of wedlock). Unlike a number of prominent female European stars of the 50s and 60s who connoted unfettered, 'natural' sexuality - Silvana Mangano, Sophia Loren, Gina Lollobrigida, Bardot - through displays of (semi)nudity in close association with nature, Deneuve was positioned as a woman whose sexuality was always under control and under wraps, her hair impeccably lacquered, her body hidden by fashionable clothes, a creature whose habitat was the salon rather than the hayfield or beach. In La Vie de château, a comedy set during the German occupation in which she is the object of desire of most of the male characters, the peak of her sexual display is to frolic around the château in a white nightdress. Her ordeal at the end of the film, while the men are busy with D-day, is to be forced to wade through a lake, sullying her immaculate tailored suit.

In this respect Deneuve was continuing a tradition of elegant French actresses modelling couture clothes, from Michèle Morgan to Edwige Feuillère, Martine Carol to Danielle Darrieux (at the beginning of her career she was even known as the new Darrieux). But whereas in the 50s such actors and their films (Adorables créatures, Mannequins de Paris) celebrated women's fashions, in the 60s Deneuve's clothes played a more ambiguous role, particularly in auteur cinema. For example, Buñuel in Belle de jour used them as an index of bourgeois repression, and the film, which marked the beginning of a long-standing partnership between Deneuve and designer Yves Saint-Laurent, fixed her image for many years as the epitome of the soignée bourgeoise. The Saint-Laurent clothes - figure-hugging, tailored, with skirts cut just above the knee - included an element of sexual display, but a controlled and class-coded one, which acted as a foil to Séverine's 'true' sexuality, expressed through her masochistic fantasies and rough sexual encounters at the brothel. A great deal of writing on Belle de jour has pondered where the division between 'reality' and 'fantasy' in the film lies, but with feminist hindsight both sides of the Séverine character appear equally fantastic.

Belle de jour turned Deneuve into an interna- se tional star. Creating a moment of perfect fit between performer, character and image, Buñuel's film successfully combined her exist-



ing, antagonistic, personae – the proper jeune fille of Les Parapluies de Cherbourg and the schizophrenic killer of Repulsion – into the ambiguous figure of the ice maiden whose intimidating beauty both covers and suggests intense sexuality. For an art film, Belle de jour was a boxoffice success, and the persona it established for Deneuve endured through Truffaut's La Sirène du Mississipi (1969), Buñuel's Tristana (1970), and Marco Ferreri's Liza (1971) – and in subdued form to Le Dernier métro and Indochine.

Given her immense popularity both at home and abroad, it is worth pondering where Deneuve's appeal lies. One clue is that, as Simone de Beauvoir has pointed out, female 'virginity' or 'frigidity' invite male conquest and suggest the need for a man to reveal to the woman her own sexuality (the Michel Piccoli character indirectly fulfils this function in *Belle de jour*). The young virgin (the older one is only ever an object of ridicule) is thus attractive because of her presumed incompleteness. It is not surprising to find her in the work of Buñuel, since the child-woman was a figure of fascination for the Surrealists, who wrote abundantly on her attractions.

There is a further, sadistic twist to this figure of male fantasy. The more immaculate and inaccessible the woman, the more she is deemed to invite profanation, which is then ascribed to her 'masochism'. The youthful Deneuve got a lot of that: she is flagellated and pelted with mud in *Belle de jour*, has a leg amputated in *Tristana* and is treated literally like a dog on a leash in *Liza*. Later, as a vampire in

The Hunger (1982), she is covered with blood. Many female actors have been put through such ordeals on screen, but the characteristic specific to Deneuve is her simultaneous representation of extreme beauty and its defilement, from reverence to rape, in a single image. In a lighter vein, watching her peel potatoes in Le Dernier métro causes a special frisson, as does seeing her cast as an 'ordinary', cardigan-clad provincial housewife in André Téchiné's Le Lieu du crime (1986).

Deneuve's mask-like face and understated performance style, her glamour and aloofness, her ice-maiden image and, as Truffaut put it, "dream element", were a throwback to the great female icons of Greta Garbo and Grace Kelly, with both of whom she has often been compared. Such qualities marked her out as different from her French contemporaries: whether the Bardot-type sex goddesses, the existential New Wave heroines, or, later, naturalistic actors such as Annie Girardot, Isabelle Huppert and Miou-Miou, or, again, the expressionist style of her contemporary rival in stardom, Isabelle Adjani.

Power and glamour

Deneuve's international career has taken her mainly to Italy, though she has made four films in Hollywood, of which Robert Aldrich's *Hustle* (1975), in which she plays a high-class call girl, and Tony Scott's vampire movie *The Hunger* are the most notable. She has, however, long been known in the US as "the most beautiful woman in the world", thanks as much to her commer-

Catherine Deneuve as icon of sexuality, opposite, and in Régis Wargnier's 'Indochine', above, where she is almost a symbol of France itself, striding through a conquered world

cials for Chanel as to her films. The exportability of Deneuve's image gives us another clue to her appeal. The combination of classy elegance and sexuality reflects precisely the two dominant clichés attached to French women: they dress well and they are highly sexed. Deneuve's success is linked to the way she has more or less willingly embraced these nationally coded values, both at home and abroad.

Acting as a semi-official ambassador for French fashion on and off screen, Deneuve did nothing to contradict the high-class mannequin image which emerged from Belle de jour and which informs all her film roles up to Indochine - where her exquisite frocks are a highlight. In terms of sexuality, the fit has been less perfect. While Deneuve was idolised as the perfect jeune fille in Les Parapluies de Cherbourg, her private life was considered scandalous, especially the fact that she had an illegitimate child with Vadim in 1963. Later both her screen image and public mores caught up with her. Her character in Je vous aime (directed by Claude Berri in 1981), for example, has a multitude of lovers and children by different fathers - a scenario not too far removed from the star's own life. And in her latest film, André Téchiné's Ma saison préférée, she plays opposite Chiara, her 20year-old daughter with Marcello Mastroianni, whom she also did not marry.

Deneuve has acted in comedies throughout her career, but though a few have been suc-



Women and their discontents: the different faces of Catherine Deneuve, in Polanski's 'Repulsion', top; in Buñuel's 'Belle de jour', centre; and in Tony Scott's 'The Hunger', bottom

◆ cessful, including La Vie de château and Le Sauvage (1974, with Yves Montand, also directed by Rappeneau), on the whole such roles have seemed at odds with her persona (Zig-Zag, directed by Laszlo Szabo in 1974 and her one attempt at producing flopped). She has retained the image established by her more serious films into the 80s and 90s, and as she has aged (extremely gracefully), the ice maiden has given way to the tragic grande bourgeoise often a heroic mother whose sedate if glamorous life is disturbed by sexual passion, usually stirred up by a younger man. Two films in particular show the durability of the sexual (re)awakening theme: Le Lieu du crime (with Wadeck Stanczak as a young criminal) and Paroles et musique (directed in 1984 by Elie Chouraqui, with Christophe Lambert as a rock star). Both deal in the familiar screen conflict between a woman's sexuality and motherhood. In Le Lieu du crime, resolution is achieved in apocalyptic fashion (the young man is killed, Deneuve's son is estranged and she gives herself up to the police), while in Paroles et musique she returns to her husband and children. In Indochine too, Deneuve is allowed a sexual relationship with a younger man (Vincent Pérez), only to be denied it when the young lover is paired with her adopted daughter.

Such narratives and the way Deneuve is used within them are indicative of the unease of French film in dealing with sexually active,

mature female characters and actors. But they are also attempts at integrating into film specific features of contemporary French feminism, a task for which the later Deneuve persona is well suited. Deneuve's characters of the 80s and 90s, with their combination of glamour, independence and determination, have been much more pleasurable for female spectators than the male fantasies of the 60s and early 70s. Deneuve has increasingly been perceived as liberated (partly for the same reasons as she was regarded as scandalous in the 60s) both on and off screen, evidenced by Gérard Depardieu's remark: "Catherine Deneuve is the man I would have liked to be." She took up overtly feminist positions when it was decidedly unfashionable in the 70s and in 1982 declared to Le Nouvel Observateur, "Yes, I am a feminist." And she is one of the actresses who makes recordings of women's novels for the feminist publishing house Editions des femmes.

But Deneuve is a very French feminist, which is to say that, like Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and other prominent French writers, her feminism is combined with glamour and elegance in a way often perceived as utterly contradictory in Britain and North America. As the discourse of overt feminism has gradually disappeared from the French political and cultural scene, one of the ways its impact has endured is through the presence in public life of professionally and intellectually powerful women who are also glamorous: examples that spring to mind include government officials Elisabeth Guigou, Martine Aubry and Ségolène Royal, the charismatic television journalist Christine Ockrent (who looks not unlike the short-haired Deneuve), and successful filmmakers Diane Kurys and Coline Serreau.

But if Guigou, Ockrent et al obey – and shape – the logic of the French job market and political scene, the logic Deneuve follows is that of the French star system. And within that system, her gender and looks are a double-edged weapon. As in her youth, they are a reminder of her to-be-looked-at-ness and of the burden of carrying the nationally coded signs of elegance and sexuality. But they are also a powerful source of pleasure, and, not negligibly, of revenue. If femininity is a masquerade, then the cool elegance of these professional French women is a sign of their being in control, rather than of being controlled as was the case back in the 60s.

Emblem of France

Deneuve is powerful in other ways too. In the embattled financial and shifting genre structures of recent French cinema, major stars are more important than ever, not for their capacity to attract audiences to cinemas, but as a means of raising production funds, guaranteeing television and video sales and generating media coverage. The cult television cultural chat show *Bouillon de culture* devoted a whole programme to Deneuve to coincide with the release of *Indochine*, as if to prove that Wargnier could not have got the film off the ground without her, or at least not on such a scale. In return, she received a real leading part in a major production – a rare opportunity in

recent years, when it has seemed as if her presence and looks were enough to signify a constellation of traits - career woman who remains feminine, determined but tragic mother, strong-willed but vulnerable lover - that allude to the changing roles of French women, but at the same time confine them to precisely this symbolic function. In films such as Le Choc (1981, with Alain Delon), Le Choix des armes (1981, with Yves Montand and Gérard Depardieu) and Fort Saganne (1984, with Depardieu), Deneuve featured in roles which were not cameos, but which occupied very little screen time and had little narrative importance compared to the roles of her male partners; yet the producers still claimed her as a major star.

This is not just clever marketing, but exemplifies a traditional gender imbalance in French casting going back to the 30s, whereby female stars may get leading parts in auteur cinema, but only exceptionally in the mainstream. It is also a perhaps unwelcome sideeffect of Deneuve's elevated status. Because of her exemplary career in both auteur and mainstream film, and of her perceived embodiment of the values of French womanhood, she has become the symbol of a certain idea of French cinema as well as of France (it was perhaps inevitable that it was Deneuve who was chosen to accompany the Minister for Culture, Jack Lang, to open a festival of French film in New York in 1983). Indeed in Indochine, Deneuve's dominating narrative role could be ascribed as a symbolic representation of France, portrayed as the liberal colonising force.

It is a measure of the importance of cinematic culture in France that film stars are so strongly implicated in representations of national identity. Jean Gabin, as the train driver of Jean Renoir's La Bête humaine, became the key symbolic figure in the celebrations to mark the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989, in much the same way as Bardot and Deneuve literally personify France in the statues of Marianne. As might be expected, the male representation is historically grounded and actively social; the female one abstract and passive. Of course Gabin could model himself on Georges Clémenceau for Le Président in 1961, while Deneuve could only realistically be cast as a president's lover, as in Le Bon plaisir (1983, directed by Francis Girod). But the difference goes beyond role models, since male stars such as Gérard Depardieu are offered a far wider range of roles encompassing a spectrum of characters from French social history, whether based on real or fictional sources (for example, Danton or Germinal). And the recently formulated French heritage genre does not seem to have altered this pattern, in that male stars still dominate in films such as Jean de Florette, Cyrano de Bergerac and Tous les matins du monde.

But perhaps the success of Camille Claudel (with Isabelle Adjani), L'Amant, and indeed of Indochine will herald better leads for female stars of Deneuve's stature. French history, society and literature, after all, are not devoid of tough, inspiring and glamorous women crying out to be embodied by Catherine Deneuve. 'Indochine' opens on 26 March and is reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau on page 48 of this issue

from Vietnam

What does the warm reception given 'Indochine' in both France and Vietnam reveal about the two cultures? By Anne Jackel and Xavier Michel Duverger

The release in the first quarter of 1992 of three films that touched on the French colonial experience in Indochina received unprecedented media coverage in France, where - unlike in the United States - war films are rare and the events in Indochina have been hitherto largely ignored by cinema. By the end of the year, Jean-Jacques Annaud's The Lover, Pierre Schoendoerffer's Diên Biên Phû and Régis Wargnier's Indochine proved to have been among the most popular domestic films: The Lover (though not as successful as Basic Instinct at the French box office) accounted for receipts of almost FF50 million as the top French film; Indochine followed in third place, with takings of around FF35 million, closely behind 1492: Conquest of Paradise; even Diên Biên Phû, a war story, appeared in the top ten.

It is a welcome success story for largescale French projects in an increasingly shrinking domestic market. With their budgets of between FF112 million and FF150 million, the three films were among the most expensive produced in 1991, and were financed largely by French capital (The Lover, a Franco-British co-production with a majority French share of 80 per cent is the only one shot in English). Back in 1987, the excellent box-office response to Claude Berri's Jean de Florette and Manon des Sources convinced producers – and their financiers - that they had found a substitute for the no longer popular French policiers and comedies in literary adaptations set in 'authentic' French locations and rooted in 'genuine' French culture. But new strategies developed in the late 80s to encourage the production of big-budget movies did nothing to halt the decline in cinema audiences (which reached an all-time low of 117 million in 1991) or to dent the growing popularity of US blockbusters. Film budgets may have soared, but spectacular historical adaptations and period melodramas have on the whole failed at the box office.

Mythical past

In the 90s the more exotic locations of France's imperial past seem to have struck a chord in the imagination - if not the conscience - of French audiences. The origin of this desire to revisit a seemingly forgotten past goes back to 1990 and 1991, when the Vietnamese government announced the reopening of its borders and eased a situation which had previously precluded any exchange, cultural or otherwise.

The media coverage and intense promotional campaigns the three films engendered emphasised their importance as cultural events. Each release was accompanied by the publication of a photo-album-story book, providing a new set of printed references for this 'rediscovered' imaginary past. Yet there was no sign of unease among the many interviews, articles and debates which surrounded the films' appearance and hardly any attempt was made to explore further the legacy of France's colonial past. No discomfort was exhibited, and comments were restricted on the whole to a series of aesthetic value judgments, various comments on the paucity of French films dealing with France's colonial past and the Vietnam war - by comparison with American production - and a vague consensus on the convenient timing of the reconcilia-

tion, as exemplified by the collaboration of General Giap and the French army forces on Diên Biến Phú.

France has always had a strong belief in a universal cultural mission, but the emergence in the last decade of a Beur or Franco-Arab culture, among others, has challenged the alleged consensus on national and cultural identity at a time when the nation has had difficulty in articulating a new postcolonialist identity. Throughout her long colonial history. France annexed a great number of territories, but the 'otherness' of the people annexed was supposed magically to disappear into an established French identity based in part on the purported universality of the principles established by the French Revolution. Indochine film lacking the appeal of a romantic love and Diên Biên Phû undoubtedly raise questions of identity, but solve them through the recreation of a mythical and unproblematic colonial past based on an implicitly assimilationist model. In that sense, they do not constitute post-colonial texts, but neocolonial texts in an appropriately formalist classical style.

> Films occupy a significant position in the process of the construction of values and identity. But the new brand of mainstream film-making in 1992 France belongs to a cinema of the past, a cinema which like British heritage films attempts to forge a national consensus based on the celebration of a nationhood deeply rooted in a colonial empire. The very success of films anchored in images of a lost and largely mythical past and their acceptance and popularity with both left and right is not only symptomatic of the identity crisis experienced by France during the Mitterrand years, but also reveals a France unprepared for the cultural renewal needed to come to terms with recent socio-economic and cultural developments. It is a France which, unable to offer a model for Europe, indulges in a nostalgic world of make-believe, the only place where the illusion of an unproblematic colonial model can be maintained.

> In June 1992, at the National Film Theatre in London, Jean-Luc Godard said: "When you have no identity, you are searching for an image." Yet the image conveyed by the picture-book historicism of the films of 1992 is a regressive one that is unlikely to help French cinema survive its present identity crisis, even if it temporarily succeeds in keeping the industry afloat. From a country with a legendary commitment at both individual and institutional levels to the protection of the art form of the twentieth century and its continuation into the twenty-first, one may have expected something more innovative.

> But what is perhaps even more problematic is the reaction of the Vietnamese to the



Cheek to cheek: Eliane (Catherine Deneuve) with her adopted daughter Camille (Linh Dan Phan), who is the star of the film for its Korean audiences

French projects. One would have thought that a product that had to be made palatable to mainstream western audiences in order to justify its multi-million Franc investment would inevitably have offended the sensibilities of the Vietnamese people. Yet not only did the Vietnamese government authorise filming, but it also went so far as to provide facilities, technicians and thousands of extras. Five thousand Vietnamese soldiers were cast in the final scene of Diên Biên Phû; Nguyen Thu, director of photography in Hanoi and ex-cameraman of the Vietnamese Popular Army at the battle of Diên Biên Phû, was put in charge of co-ordinating Vietnamese participation (Schoendoerffer had served in the same position in the same battle for the French army). Indeed, Schoendoerffer made his film at the invitation of the Vietnamese authorities and with their approval (a fact which may explain the film's total silence on the ideological context of the war).

Distorting mirrors

There were protests – the Vietnamese journal Hanoi Moi pointed out that the film gave only the French director's point of view and wondered why the French were prepared "to spend FF100m to recreate their worst defeat abroad" - but the Vietnamese authorities dispelled any doubts. General Giap is reported to have convinced reluctant communists of the value of the project, emphasising its political impact and economic interest.

Trade was bound to follow, he claimed, and he was not entirely wrong. Who would have thought that the war-torn country of Vietnam would one day become the latest fashionable destination for French tourists? Yet today, the French are starting to rediscover the charms of their ex-colony and travel agents are urging their customers to take their holidays there before the United States lifts its embargo and the country changes too much. The images they sell are those of the films.

The journal of the Franco-Vietnamese Association commented that "whatever the faults and the omissions in the three films, they are important because they signal that, after 40 years, the period of bereavement is finally over. Indochina comes out of the dark." The article optimistically concluded: "France realises that the Empire is dead." But does she? Aren't the images of the empire and its alleged shared (French) culture the main attractions of the films to French audiences?

The worst scenario would be that when the films open in Vietnam, they seduce the Vietnamese too and become a distorting mirror in which Vietnamese audiences see and accept the images the French media have created to portray them. Indeed in Korea, the 'cultural capital' born out of years of communism seems to have allowed a different reading of Indochine which privileges the second part of the film and makes Linh Dan Phan (Camille, Eliane's adopted daughter) the heroine and the film a star vehicle for the young Vietnamese actress and a box-office hit. Or could it be that cinema audiences in South East Asia are so deprived of images of themselves in European films that they acclaim any western film prepared to engage with any such representation?

Drafted in to play a tutor in Derek Jarman's 'Wittgenstein', Michael O'Pray reflects on how the film was made and on the similarities between the director and the philosopher

PHILOSOPHICAL EXTRAS

Derek Jarman was directing a film written by Terry Eagleton and produced by Tariq Ali's company Bandung, renowned primarily for its documentaries. And I'd had a call to appear as a tutor in an early scene. Always keen to confirm my total lack of acting skills and at the same time to indulge a vanity of sorts, I turned up at the backstreet studio off Waterloo Station as I'd been asked, all in black – not a difficult request to meet these days.

The thought of playing a tutor in Jarman's Wittgenstein had a certain irony as I'd been a philosophy student in a stronghold of Wittgensteinianism at London University in the 70s. So there was an odd but satisfying sense of a circle being completed. It also seemed a fascinating opportunity to meet again a group of figures who represented for someone in his late 40s a certain radical past - Tariq Ali, whom I'd last seen in the flesh in a military jacket with a similarly clad Robin Blackburn heading an anti-Vietnam demo in the late 60s; Eagleton, the propounder of Marxist aesthetics who had doggedly charted the intellectual passage of the intervening years; Jarman, a bête noire who in the mid-80s, against all odds, had turned out an important political film-maker.

All three were brought into what seemed an unholy alliance through Wittgenstein, whose politics and sexuality had been carefully skirted until the recent publication of Ray Monk's biography. Wittgenstein's homosexuality had always been known, but the knowledge had been protected by his literary heirs. What Jarman found in him was a gay figure whose life was not one with which he might immediately identify – a tortured Austrian philosopher who lived for much of his life in Cambridge.

The last time I'd been in one of Derek's films was in the heyday of yuppie Britain, in The Last of England (1987) filmed on a massive Docklands quay in the heart of the Thatcherite dream (and where Kubrick had shot Full Metal Jacket). The day was spent in down-and-out attire, for the most part supping tea in a caravan with other actors sheltering from the bitter cold (the conventional distinction between actor and extra always seems wrong in Jarman's films, as most of his 'extras' are friends playing truant from other lives). The film was shot on Super 8 by the younger generation of Cerith Wyn Evans, Chris Hughes and Richard Heslop. The Last of England now seems like the last gasp of that post-punk movement which had witnessed the rise of Thatcher and the dissolution of Britain and had reacted to it with a visual excess that owed much to Derek's early work.

The atmosphere on the set of Wittgenstein is much the same - friendly production people offering coffee and shouting for quiet; two cooks amicably squabbling in the kitchen; an ex-BBC make-up artist busy in the corner of what looks like an old school hall; a good-looking young boy (obviously young Wittgenstein) reading rather self-consciously with his attractive chaperone; sculptor and actor Roger Cook (who played Jesus in The Garden) also dressed in black and also busy reading at a long trestle table. The six tutors are Derek's literary agent, one of the production managers, two sisters who own a coffee bar in Soho, Roger Cook and myself. Tariq Ali appears rather bemusedly from time to time to survey the scene, in between answering the phone and doing interviews for American journalists and film crews alerted the day before of president-to-be Bill Clinton's Oxford student days in the radical 60s. The disparate histories of the twentieth century giddily coalesce on this strange day.

Joe Orton of philosophy

Discovered to be a tutor, I am sent to the makeup artist, and as she transforms me into a white-faced, dark-eyed, slicked-back-hair vampire (a great improvement, I feel) I understand Derek's interpretation of Wittgenstein's early education. Afterwards, my face under the stiff mask, I wander around, smoking cigarettes, drinking black coffee and attempting unsuccessfully to read. When Derek emerges from the studio he finds my transformation funny and drags me in to watch the shooting. There are about 15 people on set, but the atmosphere is relaxed. Derek looks well and is in his element, busy filling me in on the scene and life in general while flitting off to check a detail or to ask the cameraman's opinion on the shot and, after the first take, quick to suggest to the young boy what movements to make (he is supposed to be in a cinema sucking a lolly and making shadows on the screen with his hands).

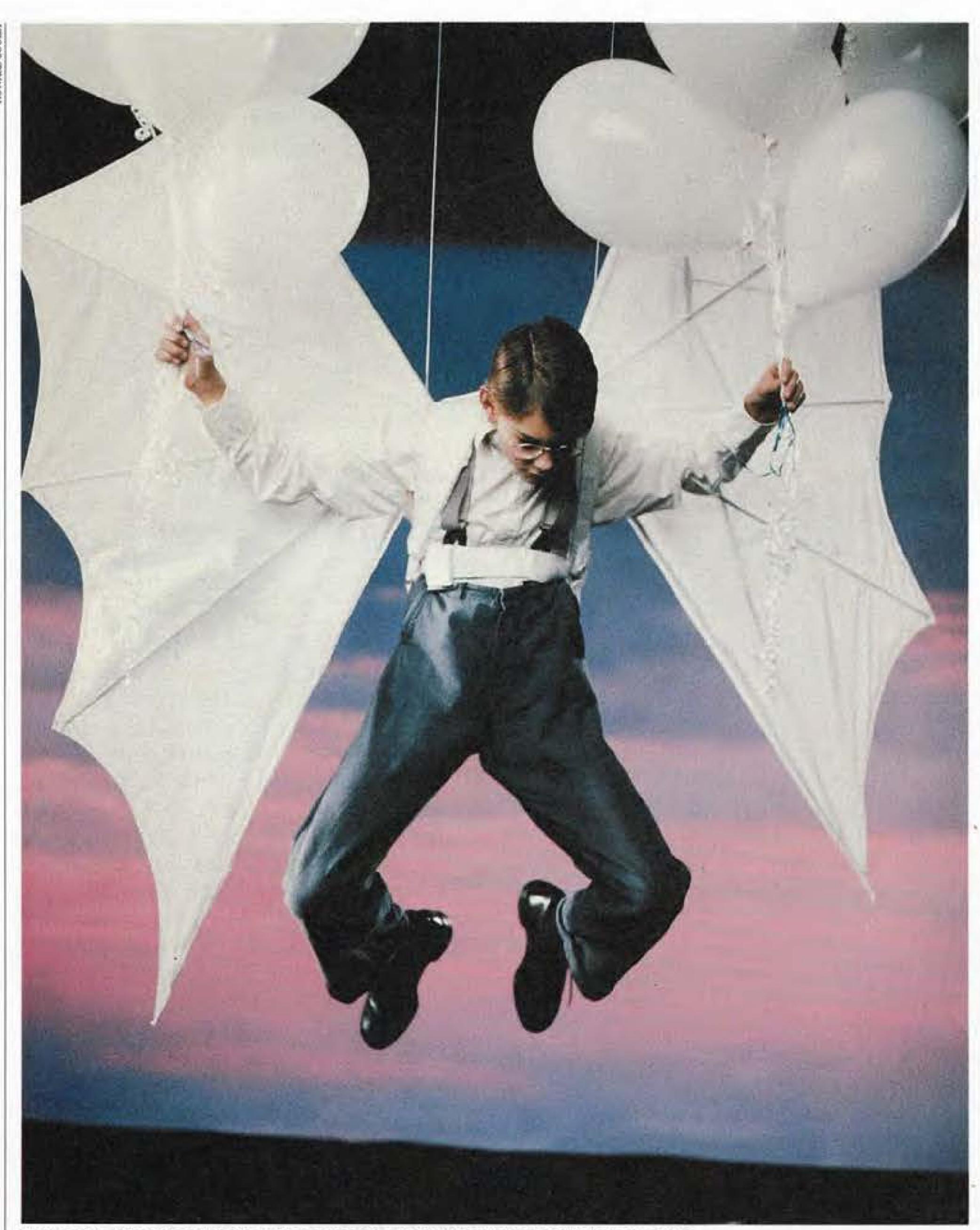
Film critics should have to spend a day as an actor/extra every few years to remind them of the difficulties not only of making films, but of acting itself. A few days later, no longer burdened by anxieties about my skills, I visit the set again to find Karl Johnson, who played Ariel in *The Tempest*, wandering about deep in

thought, muttering to himself and looking disturbingly like Wittgenstein. Tilda Swinton is busy becoming Lady Ottoline for the funny bedroom scene with Bertrand Russell, played by Michael Gough, who turns up later. The ballet dancer Lynn Seymour is sitting patiently in a tutu behind the camera waiting for her scene. Derek seems more fraught and tired, and though he is on schedule (just), he will have to rely on long hours (8am to 7.30pm) and the goodwill of the crew. "That's why it's important to work with friends," he explains. At one point, to ease the crew's nerves over a particular set-up, he calls: "Take your time. We're not under any pressure."

Gwynn Pritchard, the then commissioning editor for education at Channel 4, approached Tariq Ali about a series on great philosophers treated as 52-minute plays about the philosophers' lives and ideas rather than the usual Bryan Magee-type talking-head approach. Ali commissioned four scripts from left-wing writers: Howard Brenton for Socrates, Ali for Spinoza, David Edgar for Locke and Terry Eagleton for Wittgenstein. Pritchard left Channel 4 and budget cuts excluded Socrates. Spinoza is directed by Christopher Spencer, who has done documentaries in the past for Ali's company Bandung, and Locke by Peter Wollen. But for Wittgenstein, Ali "needed a director with a fantastic amount of vision and imagination... and Jarman came to mind." Ali had seen and admired The Tempest, Caravaggio and Edward II and as he saw it, Wittgenstein needed someone "quirky and with lateral thinking to bring this very weird mystic to life." Derek thought the script was "quite cheerful and good fun". The budget was considerably under £200,000; Jarman had no problem working to low budgets but wanted to do the commission on film, unlike the others which were on tape.

Ben Gibson at the BFI Production Division was approached. He was "tickled" by the idea of Eagleton and Jarman doing Wittgenstein and put more money in with some hope of theatrical release, a showing at the Berlin Film Festival and the desire for the film to be shot on Super 16. The theatrical and television rights were sold to Uplink in Japan (the distributors there of all Jarman's films), who wanted a 35mm blown-up version. This input increased the length from 52 to about 78 minutes. Ali remarks that when Derek's "amazing community of friends and people who worked with him got in on the act, we had fantastic support." He was impressed by the "stunning" visuals of the rushes, achieved very simply with "black drapes and rich colours in front". "I enjoy the improvisation and directors who are not bound by convention." Eagleton's script was written to be shot on location in Cambridge, so a lot of changes had to be made for it to be shot in a studio. But as Ali affirms: "I think we've remained loyal to the spirit of his script." Derek had told Ali that he now enjoys working in a studio and that at this stage in his life a two-week studio shoot is something he still feels he can do quite easily.

While the question of whether or not Wittgenstein was gay is no longer an issue – he was – the nature of his sexual practice still



Between heaven and earth: Clancy Chassay as the child Wittgenstein, with his flying machine

churns the waters. Was he a promiscuous client of rough trade? Was he, as some have described him, the "Joe Orton of philosophy"? Whatever the truth, Jarman has handled Wittgenstein's love life with warmth and a gentleness that could only offend the intransigent who feels the philosopher's private life is not for the public domain.

Jarman has definitely tweaked Eagleton's script (and gained much, one feels, from its toughness). The result is an irreverent but passionate portrait of the philosopher as a tortured spirit and lover of men. According to Ali, the Martian figure, a humorous rendering of Wittgenstein's use of an alien to draw out philosophical points about language games and forms of life, is a Jarman addition. And with Wittgenstein Jarman is at last dealing with a gay figure of the twentieth century – unlike Sebastian, Caravaggio or Edward II. (War Requiem is the film that comes the closest.)

The similarities between director and subject matter are stronger than their very different lives might indicate and Wittgenstein's unease with his sexuality and attitude to authority form some common ground. Jar-

man's struggle to come out was difficult and as one of a generation shaped in the austere moralism of the 50s, he still admits to not being entirely at ease with his sexuality. Also director and philosopher share an identification of work with a spiritual and moral personal quest. Wittgenstein's residency in England, an exile in a culture in which he did not quite fit, provides a metaphor perhaps for Jarman's own ambivalent relationship to his culture.

Jarman's film is also a witty take on the Bloomsbury culture that supported the young and hypersensitive Viennese philosopher. Keynes, Russell and Lady Ottoline recognised Wittgenstein's genius but failed to understand his work in its profoundest sense – that the limitations placed on philosophy were at the same time an acknowledgment of the joyous and torturous nature of life itself. As Wittgenstein stated: the "unutterable will be – unutterably – contained in what has been uttered" – a view that enmeshed logic with mysticism. Wittgenstein read avidly cheap crime magazines, loved Westerns, lived simply (a bed and a canvas chair often sufficed), was a brave soldier, dressed

outrageously for his times (open-necked shirts and leather jerkins at Cambridge high table), gave away his personal fortune to poets and others and revolutionised philosophy.

When I was a student Wittgenstein always seemed to make Sartre and any other twentieth-century philosopher you could name seem dull and bourgeois. His life was dedicated to rational thought; he was also the most self-conscious philosopher of the century. He understood the insanity that lurked in philosophical discourse, especially in the sceptical tradition. His ideas flowing through Oxford and Cambridge and the American departments influenced sociology, anthropology, psychology and all branches of philosophy itself. His writing was either gnomic and poetic as in the *Tractatus* or intensely personal as in the first-person agonies of *Philosophical Investigations*.

Torment and humour

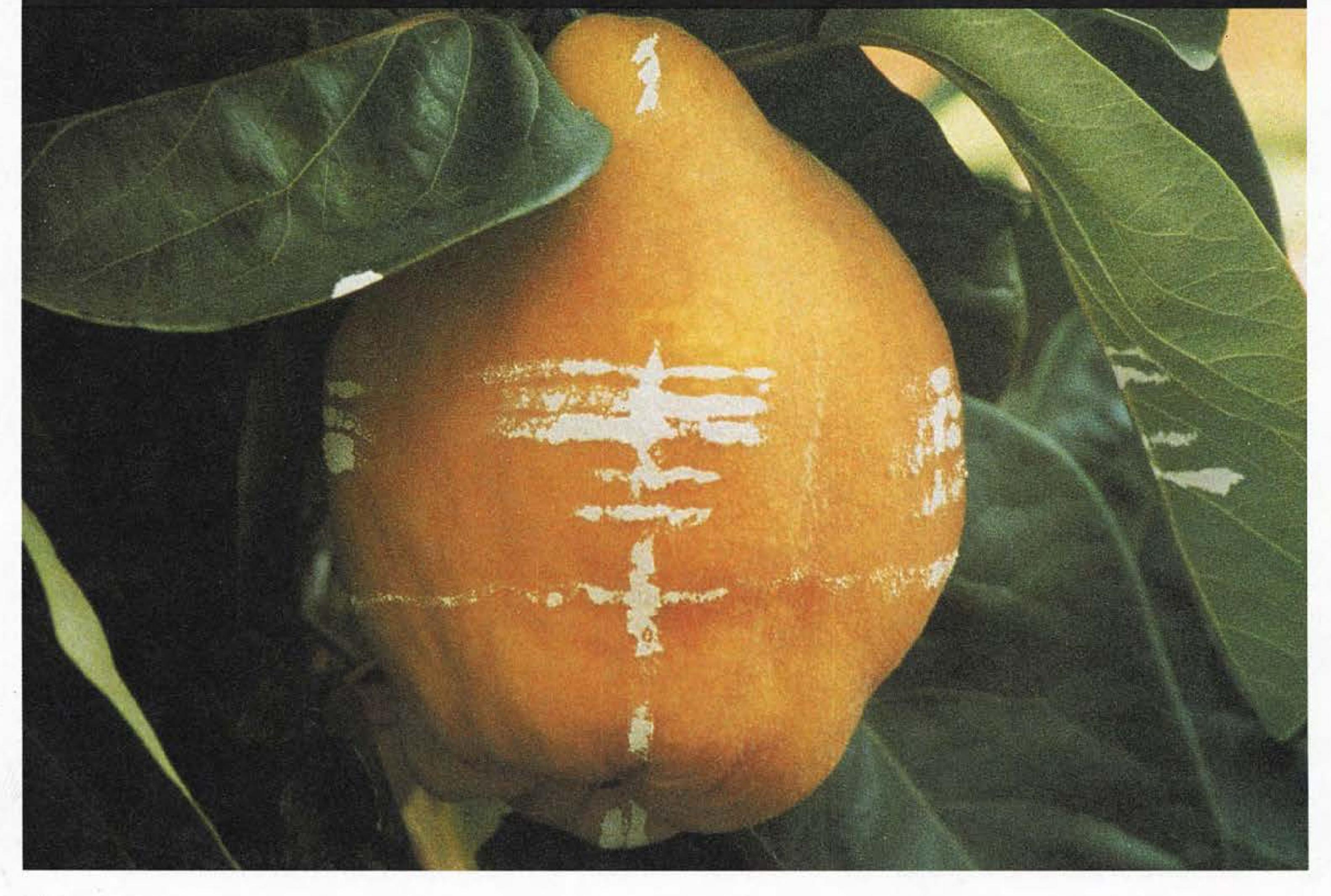
Wittgenstein's doubt and anguish about articulating ideas comes close to that of the Romantic artist. There is also a moral and intensely personal quest locked in the need for clarity in what may seem to many to be arcane matters of philosophical discourse, but which for Wittgenstein was an attempt to fix the bounds of sense. Jarman has looked at the life as one of torment and humour and has used his own engaging irony. Unlike with Jarman, the connections between Wittgenstein's homosexuality and his work were strenuously and angrily denied by him; nevertheless, there is a passion and intensity which we feel taps a tremendous sexual energy and turmoil.

Wittgenstein is a further depiction by Jarman of childhood, one imagines his own. (Autobiography is central to his work since Caravaggio.) The figure of the boy child appears in The Last of England (Jarman himself shot on home movies by his father), The Garden and Edward II, in which Edward's son is very much an observer of events who triumphs (perhaps at some cost) in the last scene over the cruelty and omnipotent greed of the adult world. In Wittgenstein Jarman introduces the childhood of the philosopher in a way that does not reflect Monk's book and which satisfies Jarman's own idea of the boy being father to the man.

The enthusiastic reception of Wittgenstein at the Berlin Film Festival was not only expressive of the genuine love and admiration felt by audiences for Jarman the man, with his determination to continue to explore gay sexuality at a time when his own condition and that of many gay men is painful and tragic, but also for a film-maker who with each new film is adding to a body of work with its own shape, themes, forms and identity - however much he continues to experiment with new ideas as he promises to do with his next work, Blueprint. After the despair of Edward II, Wittgenstein offers hope and reconciliation. Wittgenstein dies peacefully in his bed - a contrast to the horror of Edward's death by red-hot poker. Jarman has always wrestled with two kinds of fantasy - one bred from Thanatos and the other from Eros. In Wittgenstein, it is the latter that triumphs.

'Wittgenstein' opens at the ICA, London, on 26 March and is reviewed on page 63 of this issue Painting and cinema and the pollution of the image – these are among the concerns of the director of 'The Spirit of the Beehive' and 'The Quince Tree Sun'. He speaks with Rikki Morgan

VICTOR ERICE PAINTING THE SUN



Counted among the grand auteurs of Spanish cinema, Victor Erice has directed only three films in 20 years. Made in 1973 as the Franco regime tightened its dying grasp on censorship, The Spirit of the Beehive won lasting critical acclaim with its debunking of monster myths and an enigmatic child protagonist who seemed to embody the uncertain vision of a country ripe for political change. After ten years' silence, The South continued Erice's lyrical dissent and introduced an explicit preoccupation with the inexorable march of time. Another decade on, and Erice's latest film, the hybrid fiction/documentary The Quince Tree Sun, chronicles the impossible attempt of the painter Antonio López to capture on canvas the moment of splendour when the fruit on the quince tree in his garden ripens.

Rikki Morgan: As cinema reaches its 100th anniversary, what do you think there is left to say? Victor Erice: Faced with the existing inflation of images - with what Wenders has called "pollution of the image" - one of the great problems we have as film-makers today is how to give authenticity, truth, to the mass-produced image. Television daily projects thousands of images into homes throughout the world - a flood that has brought about a hypertrophy of the image. We are forced to search constantly to regain a vision of the real image for cinema, and in this I find the relationship with painting very interesting because the painter was the first creator of images in our civilisation. For me, the painter is a primitive artist: painting is a language from the dawn and cinema a language from the twilight of our civilisation.

Of course we can't go back to what the early film-makers - Lumière, Vigo, the early Renoir, Murnau - were because there is almost 100 years of cinema bearing down on us. The cinema of that era didn't reflect on itself, it just let itself live. Yet sometimes you need to look back to the origins - not to imitate, because it's impossible to reproduce the same thing, but because within a disoriented world in crisis, those origins can shed a certain light. Today everything is made according to formulae, formulae that have expelled reality, stereotypes. There's a tiredness, almost a sickness. Even though there is cinema made with great talent, it is calculated. So it's important for cinema to get back in contact with reality.

This fascination with early – 'silent' – cinema is clearly present in the enigmatic silence of 'The Spirit of the Beehive', which relies less on spoken dialogue than on a complex pattern of sound and images to demystify the 'monstrous' creatures of the cinema screen and the artificially speechless adult world of post-Civil War Spain.

The Spirit of the Beehive speaks of the generation who had lived through the Civil War. And civil war is the most terrible experience a community can live through because brother is set against brother. In a civil war everyone is defeated – there are no real victors. What characterises those people in my memory of my childhood is that they were in general very silent, introspective people. They didn't want to speak because they had lived through something so horrific. We children experienced it as a form of absence: we sensed that deep down

they were far away. And perhaps that is why there was a lack of communication.

The highly metaphorical language of the film is often seen as a strategy in response to the restrictions of censorship as well as a reflection of the atmosphere within a silenced generation.

It's something you can't judge according to notions of political determinism. I didn't set out to solve the problem of censorship: I was mainly concerned to find my own voice, and since lack of freedom is something that people of my generation carry within us, I assumed my voice would reflect that lack of freedom in a natural way. I have always believed that artistic language – and particularly poetry – is a language that is not socially codified and that censors understand only what is socially codified. So the censor was unable to cut a single metre of *The Spirit of the Beehive*: they sensed it wasn't a film that was favourable to their ideas, but they couldn't find the arguments to destroy it.

But does this complexity inevitably compromise the authenticity of the image?

In cinema there is a language of prose and a language of poetry. It's a distinction Pasolini liked to make: he talked about cinema de prosa and cinema de poesia to differentiate the two types of language. Prose always recounts things in a direct way, whereas poetry expresses the ideas of the world in a totally indirect way, and more powerfully perhaps, because it speaks to the unconscious.

One of the things I was most interested in with *The Quince Tree Sun* was to bring together the most objective language – that of documentary – and the most intimate, which is the expression of the dream. The film I had most in mind was Murnau's *Tabu*, which also mixes documentary and fiction. An important part of cinema history is built on that tension: *Tabu*, some of Vigo's films, Rossellini's *Paisà*, Rome Open City, Germany Year Zero, Renoir's The River, Hiroshima mon amour.

How does the treatment of reality in the earlier films differ from this transformation of the documentary format?

The Quince Tree Sun could be understood as a work journal, a chronicle of work day by day. In The South and The Spirit of the Beehive it's a different procedure because they are films that speak about the past. The procedure there was to take account of reality, but to influence it or even modify it to make it expressive – to reconstruct the feeling of the past. That required the more classical role of the director as someone who builds a universe by his own means.

Is there an inevitable conflict between imposing a particular interpretation of reality – even when it's only in the selection and organisation of images – and the pursuit of truth?

Generally I don't like cinema in which the message is very obvious, so I'd prefer to call it showing or suggesting a particular interpretation rather than imposing it. The language of television is an authoritarian language that seeks a hidden means of persuading the consciousness, whereas the language of cinema – or at least of the cinema I like – communicates on an emotional level and obliges people to look within themselves, but without the idea of a rigid or direct discourse. I think all the films

I have made have a common characteristic: they describe a journey of discovery, a spiritual journey. At the outset there is a consciousness that is beginning to discover things and at the end of the journey that consciousness has understood something.

How might this spiritual journey be understood in relation to 'The Spirit of the Beehive'?

We see the child's consciousness being formed throughout the film – a consciousness that will be characterised forever as separated from the conventional vision of the world. It could be the consciousness of an artist, an excess of vision through which artists see things that others don't see, or see them in a different way. At the beginning Ana is a docile, timid person – just a child who asks questions. She can't understand how there can be something so absurd in life or so terrible that makes a monster kill a child. What the monster wants, in his misery, is to be accepted into society, yet society rejects him – perhaps because of his excess of humanity, for there is something tremen-



The art of nature: Victor Erice at work

dously humane in the monster. So the child's identification with him is the identification with those who suffer, because she experiences suffering too.

In the beginning Ana exists only through her sister or through the things she is told about, but by the end she exists in her own right. The first trace of her identity has been formed, and that is why she says "I am" for the first time. But that formative process involves pain. Knowledge is like a wound; consciousness is formed through a wound.

In the absence of a driving narrative or pronounced formal manipulation – other than the discipline of still camera and real-time material – 'The Quince Tree Sun' seems to depend for its dramatic tension on a dialogue between art and nature.

On the one hand there is nature, the tree, a living subject, and on the other is painting, which is trying to reproduce the tree at the precise moment of its splendour. But the tree is not a still life: it's moving, it's alive. And that creates a tension which replicates the myth of mankind's struggle to control nature.

Is there a similar tension – or dialogue – between painting and cinema?

There is a confrontation – or relationship – between the language of painting and that of film. The artist works only with the moment, but the movie camera can capture something the painter cannot: the movement of time. Time is present in every work of artistic creation because mankind seeks permanence. The struggle to remain in the midst of what is transitory is an expression of the tragic condi-

◀ tion of existence. So Antonio Lopez's attempt to halt the tree's natural cycle and capture forever a moment in its life is doomed to failure. But he accepts this failure because he considers the tree to be something so accomplished, so complete.

Isn't there a contradiction between this respect for nature and the interference with it that Antonio's strategies to halt the movement of the tree represent? As he started work and put a metal structure round the tree, it became something else – like an artist's model. Then with the splashes of paint, like make-up, that he put on it as markers, it gradually lost its identity as a tree. When Antonio finished his work and started to take everything off – the metal structure, the plastic – I suddenly said: "But it's just a little tree!" For eight weeks we hadn't seen it as a tree.

Antonio tries to stop the flow of time, but the moment comes when he can't go on because the quinces are falling. He gets up and picks a fruit and that is when he accepts the destiny of the tree. That is when he accepts the defeat of the human enterprise and allows the tree to continue its course. For me, that is the most emotional act of the film.

Yet the film goes on after the defeat of the painter to follow the rest of the cycle of the fruit.

The film could have ended when the painter withdraws, but I felt obliged to show the generosity of this fragile little tree that every year, in silence, produces fruits which serve as food for people. Everything that has life is a source of life. When an audience sees the film and follows the path we have walked, they make the process which has been ours their own. Everyone has the capacity to create and recreate within them. And a film doesn't exist unless it is seen – if there are no eyes to look at the images, the images don't exist. When I've finished a film, it's no longer mine – it belongs to the people. I'm nothing more than an intermediary in this process.

Is there a correlation between this recognition of the need to relinquish ownership of the artistic product and the relationship between Estrella and her father in 'The South'?

Estrella came to understand that her father

was not a magician, but just a man. It's a natural law that all parents are defeated by their children: a child grows up and finds its own place and its own identity in the world and that means leaving behind some of the legacy of its parents - not forgetting that legacy, but transcending it in order to become a person. In all parenthood, the creators are defeated by their offspring - and that applies to artistic creation too. But there are people - mothers and fathers - who would like their experience with their children to crystallise at a moment in infancy. That is what happens to Estrella's father. Production difficulties prevented the filming of the final part of 'The South'. What implications did that have for the effectiveness of the film?

The father was a man divided between two histories, two universes: the universe of the north and that of the south. But in his lifetime he was unable to make the journey to the south to unite what had been separated. That is why, on the last night of his life, he places under his daughter's pillow the symbol of what had united them most: the pendulum. And in

Paul Julian Smith on politics and art in the films of Erice

WHISPERS AND RAPTURE

Three features in two decades: Victor Erice can hardly be accused of spreading himself too thin. Yet he has achieved an extraordinary presence in a Spanish cinema beset by a perpetual crisis of production, and as a member of a country whose culture rarely crosses the Pyrenees, his films are among the most widely known abroad. Antonio López, the painter subject of The Quince Tree Sun, calls him the most authentic of Spanish filmmakers - rivalled only by Pedro Almodóvar. While the juxtaposition could hardly be more incongruous -Erice's high seriousness contrasts sharply with Almodóvar's playful postmodernism - it begs the question of how Erice has achieved the status he undeniably enjoys and why his slight oeuvre looms so large in the history of Spanish and European cinema?

Erice is the quintessential auteur film-maker. The Spirit of the Beehive (1973), The South (1983), and The Quince Tree Sun (1992) stand among the most forceful products of the creative imagination of a single individual. undiluted by collaboration with others. In addition, his work is art cinema in its purest form. The loving attention paid to mise en scène, cinematography and lighting, the use of complex and elliptical narrative and the problematisation of the filmic apparatus make this a cinema of the highest intellectual rigour, untainted by base commercialism. And then there is the fact that Erice's cinema can be interpreted as a utopian project realised against all the odds and in the teeth of hostile opposition. The Spirit of the Beehive challenged Francoist censorship; The South was left incomplete when the producer pulled the plug with some 20 minutes of screen time still to shoot; The Quince Tree Sun was made under very difficult conditions, with funding provided in part (and with rumoured acrimony) by María Moreno, Antonio López's fellow artist and wife.

The notion of Erice as solitary auteur, defender of the faith of abstract aestheticism, implacable enemy of the film-making establishment, is extraordinarily pervasive, if not entirely accurate. And it hides a central and fruitful contradiction in his cinematic practice: the attempt to combine the rapture of cinema, experienced as the ecstatic suspension of time before the luminous image, with the revelation of history through the exploration of the way the traumas of Spanish politics have made their presence felt over time. The contradiction is exemplified in The Spirit of the Beehive, where the enraptured face of Ana as she watches James Whale's Frankenstein is at once a comment on the power of cinema to transcend time and an oblique pointer to the reception of cinema at a historical moment -Francoist triumphalism of the 40s when the horror on screen could be read as a metaphor for horrors off screen which could not be spoken.

Erice's cinematic manifesto
was delivered before any of his feature
films appeared. In an interview for
the long-defunct Spanish magazine
Film Ideal, published in 1969 on the
release of his first commercial project,
an episode in a portmanteau movie
called The Challenges, the young
director, a recent graduate of the
official film school, claims to
be interested only in auteur cinema.
In the pure expression of an elitist
intellectual who dares risk critical
unpopularity and commercial failure,
Erice asserts the autonomy of the

cinematic image, and confesses
that he himself cannot resolve
the elliptical enigmas of his own
narrative. But in his self-proclaimed
artistic isolation Erice remains
vulnerable, attacking not only
Francoist censorship and sclerotic
Spanish production practices, but also
the journalist he is speaking to for
structuring his (unwritten) interview
in a falsely novelistic fashion.

Fathers and daughters

In a famous conference convened by the Francoist regime itself, earlier film-makers had branded Spanish cinema politically futile, socially false, intellectually worthless, aesthetically valueless and industrially paralytic. Erice's quest for a new Spanish cinema, finally and triumphantly realised in The Spirit of the Beehive, was thus part of a widespread movement for artistic and political renovation. But 20 years after its release, the audacity and assurance of the film remain staggering. In the bravura opening sequence Erice cross-cuts between three unestablished locations in a bleak Castilian village: the improvised cinema in which two young girls watch Frankenstein; the bleached-out exterior where a veiled man tends the teeming inhabitants of the beehives; and the Vermeer-like interior where a woman sits before a window writing a letter to an unknown man. The leisurely action will reveal that the four characters are a family; but, famously, they never appear within the frame together.

But Erice's use of discontinuity editing is not simply a device borrowed from the art cinema of, say, Godard or Antonioni. It is also an oblique and typically elliptical pointer to the isolation of individuals within the false communality of Franco's Spain: in the words of the father, the glass beehive reveals "perpetual frantic haste, the useless effort of the multitude, a place where illness and death are not permitted." Erice's

shooting style is equally demanding. with a static camera holding tiny figures in long shot, standing out against a barren, freezing landscape. And the stubborn ellipses of plot also make rigorous demands on the audience. Erice cut some 20 pages of the script he had co-written with Angel Fernández Santos, including the explanatory frame tale in which the girl returns to the village as an adult: hence the series of unresolved ambiguities which bring the film close to the fantastic genre much in vogue at that time in Spanish narrative. But perhaps Erice's greatest achievement is to have seen, as one Spanish critic put it, "from behind the eyes" of a child.

It seems likely that the success of The Spirit of the Beehive at home and abroad derived in large part from its use of allusive techniques familiar from art cinema which could also be read as historical or political critique. To a Spanish audience trained in the indirect allusions of the Francoist aesthetic, the allegory was not hard to read, while foreign audiences found a film that fitted with international notions of auteur cinema and which flattered their wish to support antifascist resistance. The headline to the review in Le Monde said it all: "Frankenstein contre Franco".

Of course, Erice was not solely responsible for the success of his first feature. The luminous photography of Luis Cuadrado and hypnotic music of Luis de Pablo were vital, as was the performance of Ana Torrent (Ana), soon to star with Geraldine Chaplin in Carlos Saura's Raise Ravens. And coscriptwriter Angel Fernández Santos went on to become the chief film critic of the prestigious daily El Pais, thus ensuring Erice useful and sympathetic press coverage in the future.

But there remains a problem with The Spirit of the Beehive. By using the family as an allegory of Spanish history (by focusing, in Vicente Molina Foix's words, on "the war behind the window"), Erice risks providing an doing this he is giving her a mandate: it is she who must go to the south and do what he couldn't do.

So without its closing part in the south the film is profoundly mutilated, and it has been extremely painful for me not to have been able to finish it. In Estrella's journey to the south she was to unite the two halves of her father, so that in the end she too would have been able to say, "I am Estrella." The journey to the south was fundamental.

What difficulties does the production context present for film-makers in Spain today?

First and foremost, there's a lack of effective policy. Until now all the strategies have failed and it's an urgent problem because in 1993 we have to compete within the European market. Legislators and administrators need to formulate a better understanding of audiovisual media. And we still don't know what the market for Spanish cinema is because there's no monitoring of the box office – something we've been demanding for years. Neither is there a policy to stimulate private investment in

alibi for a historical process and falsely personalising a politics which had real and deadly public effects.

This problem of the family as asylum from history recurs more urgently in Erice's second feature, *The South*.

The opening sequence of The South is once more a bravura exercise in film-making. As dawn light filters into the bedroom of the teenage Estrella. we hear off camera the sounds of a dog barking, footsteps, and a woman's distraught voice. The shot holds still as Estrella wakes, sits up in bed and gazes pensively at the gleaming pendulum she holds on a chain in front of her eyes. Like The Spirit of the Beehive, then, The South is the story of a child's suspension before the magic of light; and like The Spirit of the Beehive it focuses on a family romance between father and daughter. The narrative exposition, typically fragmented, will gradually reveal in flashback that Estrella's father (played by a dubbed Omero Antonutti, fresh from the Tavianis' Padre Padrone) has committed suicide, disappointed in his love for both daughter and mistress.

The South is an unfinished elegy. Amid rumours (hotly denied) that the 500-page script would result in a four-hour playing time, Erice was compelled to leave unshot the final sequence in which Estrella leaves the barren north for the exotic south of her dreams, where she will commit incest with the half-brother her father had sired with his mistress. To the characters (and perhaps to the Basque-born Erice) the south is a magical place of escape and transcendence which is more spiritual than geographic. It is a space identified with cinema: father and daughter are entranced by the luminous image of a film star in a B movie. But where ten years earlier the rapture of cinema had offered an escape from the horrors of Francoist repression, here its status is less urgent, more sentimental. And while the ellipses of The Spirit of the Beehive



Images of death: the ending of 'The Quince Tree Sun'

cinema through tax incentives as there is in France and other countries.

There is a tendency to leave everything to market forces, as if anything not certified by the market should not exist. But to abandon artistic expression to market forces is to condemn other forms of expression to non-existence. Such forms may not represent a huge majority, but they represent someone and deserve to exist. Besides, that's often where the most valuable work is produced.

are to be read within the context of a cinema forced to couch its critique in allegory, those of *The South* come close to formal enigmas.

In his aestheticised depiction of the poverty-stricken Spain of the 50s and his privatisation of political issues, Erice repeats the lack of political analysis characteristic of Spanish society and cinema after the transition to democracy. Subscribing to what film historian José Enrique Monterde has called the "law of conciliation and consensus, the law that says that no one is guilty of anything and we were all victims," the ellipses of The South seem more a product of wilful amnesia than a provocation to memory. Erice, the selfproclaimed auteur, is thus not always innocent of that generic defect of Spanish film, garbancerismo (literally 'chickpea-ism'): the lazy and nostalgic recourse to reassuring popular clichés.

The man who pulled the plug on the film four weeks before the end of the shooting schedule was Elías Querejeta, the most influential producer of the time. The South clearly benefited from being associated with a company specialising in serious art movies which dominated the prize and festival circuit, and like Saura's Carmen (made in the same year), it was granted a special government subsidy for films of "exceptional quality". In spite of appearances, Erice was hardly the isolated underdog.

The year in which The South and Carmen were released was also the year of the new Socialist government's generous reform of the state subsidy system. As film-makers rushed to realise pet projects (their zeal sometimes enhanced by the possibility of artificially inflating budgets), Erice avoided the big screen for ten years, making a living from publicity spots for Nescafé, for which his approach was no less meticulous than for his features. As subsidies began to dry up, the Spanish film industry resumed its decline. In the ten years following

of functioning cinemas fell by almost half and the audience for Spanish films by 80 per cent, from 78 to 14 million. The second half of the 80s was dominated by Almodóvar, whose production company El Deseo has trounced once profitable but more modest producers such as Querejeta. It is thus a very different industry which has given a rapturous reception to *The Quince Tree Sun*.

Objects suspended in light

Antonio López, whose reputation as a mayerick rivals that of Erice himself, is the third of Erice's enigmatic father figures. Shown in the credits sequence stretching and priming his own canvas, he displays an amiable modesty and unworldliness. His walled garden, in which he confronts with singular intensity the small quince tree he has chosen to paint, is the latest in a series of enclosed spaces in which Erice plays out his subtly modulated dramas. And suspended equivocally between documentary and fiction, the film is Erice's most reflexive commentary yet on the nature of representation.

López (like Erice) obsessively pursues an impossible project: the reproduction of a constantly changing model. Like Erice, too, he pays particular attention to framing, criss-crossing the garden with a grid of threads and leaving tiny traces of paint on leaves and fruit. But the artist's quixotic enterprise (the attempt to hit a moving target in notably inclement weather) is doomed to failure: after a month of labour López will be forced to abandon the painting on which he has worked so heroically.

Unlike López, Erice finished his picture. An unscripted film which began as a television short became a feature over two hours in length which was awarded the prestigious critics' prize at Cannes. Yet this most abstract of Erice's projects is also his

Does condemnation of the dominance of commercial concerns at the cost of artistic values imply an inevitable division between art and popular cinema? I think that 'popular' today is an empty concept. The audience is very divided – it doesn't constitute a mass in the way it did when cinema was a single entity. Throughout the world we're witnessing the birth of a new and valuable public that should be catered for – spectators who choose the films they want to see – and it's as much a public as any other, because the other is already served by the American and multinational productions.

How can we compete with those films that spend so much money on publicity alone, that are sold just on publicity? I don't pretend to get into that territory. I know there are spectators for the kind of films I make and like. So we must be allowed to use our initiative because if that is wiped out then something very valuable will be lost. Sometimes very beautiful things are born out of fragility.

'The Quince Tree Sun' opens on 2 April and is reviewed on page 59 of this issue

> most historical. As López paints, his radio relays news bulletins about the Gulf war; Polish labourers remodel the studio; Chinese visitors drop in. Occasionally the camera pans beyond the painter's sanctuary over the urban detritus of Madrid or lingers on lonely night-time windows in shots compared by the director to Edward Hopper's empty cityscapes. In its apparently random references to the world outside the garden, The Quince Tree Sun testifies to the new cosmopolitanism of Spain, to its entry into anxious urban anomie. It is a long way from the villages of Castile.

> The final sequence recreates a childhood dream of López in which the lushly rotting flesh of quince fruit points unequivocally to death, "under a light which turns everything to ashes." Erice shows us an abandoned camera and arc light looming over the tiny tree. It is his clearest allegory of the dangers of cinema, of its unerring tendency to corrupt the real. And it is not too far fetched to see Erice's fanatical perfectionism (like López's) as an attempt to defer death and to forestall mortality.

The image which remains of Erice's cinema is of objects suspended in light: the child's face before the screen, the pendulum by the window, the quince in the pale autumn sun. However, it is not enough to say that such images are 'haunting' or 'magical'. Searching for light, hunting for time, Erice pursues that curious combination of movement and stasis (sequence and frame) which is inherent in cinema. To say that he does not achieve his ambition or cannot achieve it alone is by no means to belittle his achievement. Rather it is to acknowledge that the purity of art cinema is never unsullied by commercial interests, that the isolation of the auteur is a fiction which must be submitted to analysis. Erice reminds us of how much we have lost in a time when the rapture of cinema has fallen out of fashion.

With the release of a remake of zombie film 'Night of the Living Dead', Steve Beard reflects on these low-class movie monsters

PARTICULAR PLACE TOGO

The vampire, the werewolf, the Frankenstein monster, the Egyptian mummy, even the stalk-and-slash killer - these fabulous creatures of cinema have all had their chroniclers and mythologists. But what of the humble zombie? With Tom Savini's remake of George Romero's seminal 1968 horror film, Night of the Living Dead, the zombie, like the vampire or mummy, has returned from the other side of the grave. But it lacks the singular magnificence of a Dracula or a King Tut. "Zombies are the real lower-class citizens of the monster world and that's why I like them," Romero has said. Zombies always hunt in packs; they are blood-thirsty automatons who add to their numbers by feeding on human flesh. Individually, they are slow, stumbling and weak. Collectively, they are a rampaging mob of clawing hands and gnashing teeth.

Savini's remake of Romero's classic, apart from being shot in colour, sticks very close to the original. The set-up is basically the same: a group of squabbling survivors take refuge from their zombie persecutors in a remote farmhouse and try to make it through the night. Savini, who worked as the special effects artist on Romero's two sequels to Night of the Living Dead, doesn't come close to expanding on the role of the zombie in the 90s and misses out on the opportunity to draw parallels between the image of the zombie as surplus human capacity processed through the system as grotesque 'social waste' and conscious fears about mass unemployment in today's recessionary climate. Romero, by contrast, really shook things up.

Romero completely transformed the zombie mythology he inherited from the voodoo movies of the 30s and early 40s. White Zombie,

Revolt of the Zombies, King of the Zombies, Revenge of the Zombies, Voodoo Man: these gothic shockers all used the same formula. Typically, Bela Lugosi would be the evil sorcerer who ran a Caribbean sugar plantation, while the zombies would be the workforce of resurrected corpses he controlled with his 'devil doll'. Shuffling, blank-eyed, anonymous, they provided what James B. Twitchell has called some of the "most concussive images" in film history. He goes on: "If the audience of the Depression thought the blank stares of the bread-liners were unsettling, these images make them seem tame. It is not death that is macabre; it is living death."

Romero gave the imagery extra bite. He is almost entirely responsible for the familiar incarnation of the zombie as ghoulish cannibal. Or as Kim Newman puts it: "The most obvious and immediate effect of the success of Night of the Living Dead was a sudden epidemic of inferior flesh-eating zombie films." These include Ted V. Mikels' The Astro-Zombies (1969) starring John Carradine; Ken Wiederhorn's Shock Waves (1970, UK title: Almost Human), starring Peter Cushing as the leader of a Nazi zombie army; Benjamin Clark's Children Shouldn't Play with Dead things (1972), a teens-in-jeopardy horror spoof; and Bob Clark's Dead of Night (1972), a return-from-Vietnam cartoon allegory. Meanwhile, the post-punk black farce of Dan O'Bannon's Return of the Living Dead (1985) gave rise to camp genre-benders like Raiders of the Living Dead (1987), The Video Dead (1987) and Chopper Chicks in Zombietown (1990).

Romero also gave the zombie a new lease of cinematic life by making it resonate with the implication of social plague. But he was not the first to bring it back home. The spate of sciencefiction monster movies which appeared in the 50s used the glassy-eyed trance of zombiedom as an image of alienation. In movies like Don Siegel's Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956) and Gene Fowler Jnr's I Married a Monster from Outer Space (1958), aliens take over the bodies of innocent small-town consumers in preparation for a mass invasion. What gives them away to the vigilant observer is not so much their lack of animation as their trivial deviations from the social norm (working late in the basement, failing to turn on the car headlights). These are films whose political unconscious has less to do with the Red menace or McCarthyism than with the social conformism demanded by Fordist economic integration. The anxiety they express is not that some Americans might be secretly different, but that all Americans might be obscurely the same - serial instances of such contemporary stereotypes as William H. Whyte's Organization Man.

Romero's zombies are different. No longer representative of the faceless masses of Fordism, they instead refer to the hollowing out of this constituency by a post-Fordist organisation of labour. Romero's zombies stand in for those workers and consumers who, since the flash-point year of 1968 when the crisis in the old Fordist system first blew up, have been thrown on the scrap heap. Economically extinct, socially displaced, they return to devour those

who have survived them. Less the lower-class citizens of the monster world and more the disenfranchised underclass of the material world, they are a projection of post-modern capitalism's worst anxieties about itself.

The point about Romero's film compared to Siegel's is that the zombies of Night of the Living Dead, far from being anonymous, are heterogeneous. They are lean, fat, old, young, male, female; they are dressed in suits, jeans, pyjamas, slips, nightgowns and, in one case, nothing at all; they are rural, metropolitan, suburban. The implication – one that has become more transparent to more people since 1968 – is that nobody is immune from the social restructuring of post-Fordism. Everybody's job is potentially at risk.

This is especially apparent in Romero's two successor movies to Night of the Living Dead. In Dawn of the Dead, which restages the siege narrative of the original film inside a shopping mall, and Day of the Dead, which shifts the scenario underground into a military bunker, the social typology of the zombies is absurdly specific. In Dawn of the Dead alone there is a nun, an airforce general, a Hare Krishna disciple, a softball player, an insurance salesman and a clutch of highly individuated grotesques. Because the film is set in a shopping mall, critics have been tempted to view its zombies as parodic consumers. Romero has suggested as much himself. But Dawn of the Dead is not a satire on the Fordist consumer society, however much it thinks it is. It is a film unaware of its real political significance.

If the methodology of Fredric Jameson is adopted and the film is treated as a 'dream-text' with a political unconscious buried beneath a layer of critical defence mechanisms, then it is possible to see that the zombie is a figure of an expanding post-Fordist underclass filtered through a bourgeois imaginary of disgust. Exiles from the shrinking borders of that part of society which still works, Romero's zombies are seen as moaners, idlers, scavengers, dummies. They are presented as the scum of the earth; in other words, they indicate a hysterical class fantasy. Raw, blown apart, exposed, they have been completely desubjectified (they do not even qualify for a point-of-view shot). The survivalists of Dawn of the Dead are permitted their cameos of consumer boredom (playing poker with thousands of useless dollars, getting dressed up with no place to go). The zombies are permitted only to wander. If they get in the way, they are run over, shot, sideswiped or otherwise pulped.

All very ironic, given that the only material difference between the two classes of bodies is that, in Paul Virilio's terms, they are "metabolic vehicles" that move at different speeds. The zombies want to consume as much as their human counterparts; it's just that they've forgotten how. Unlike the somnambulistic zombies of Invasion of the Body Snatchers, the zombies of Dawn of the Dead are inept. They bump into each other, fall over, stumble up the escalators, knock over display cabinets and crush goods underfoot. The confusion is all very comical, but it is not a satire on mindless consumerism. It is an oblique commentary on precisely the



The living dead: director George Romero surrounded and mobbed by his zombie admirers

loss of those smooth reflexes sustaining the Fordist economy. The zombies are victims of a selective abandonment of the "metabolic vehicle" of the masses by post-modern capitalism. They are demobilised Organization Men.

Day of the Dead is a more traditional film than either Night of the Living Dead or Dawn of the Dead. The underground military base that serves as its location is presented as the microcosm of a familiar dystopian society rather than, as in the previous films, a social terrain which it is the purpose of the action to dispute. The zombies are a poor lot as well. Having been reabsorbed into a conventional military machine by the leaders of the base, they don't signify much more than the proletariat in chains. Certainly, it's no surprise to see Frankenstein's monster dragged out of the myth pool during the course of the film (Bub, the "zombie with a soul"). It's almost as if Romero has gone back to basics and made Day of the Dead as White Zombie with added gore.

There are a couple of fragments in the film, however, which are more interesting, appearing as they do to connect a post-Fordist political unconscious with the material conditions of film-making. The first is the scene where a couple of lower-echelon members of the base show off the Ritz, their kitsch facsimile of a mass leisure environment, complete with lounger, sunshade and wooden trellis. The bunker scenes were all filmed in an abandoned limestone mine in Pennsylvania, which since the end of the Second World War had been used as a storage facility for all sorts of consumer durables (boats, golf-carts, powdered milk, feature-film negatives). From industrial workplace o consumer garbage dump to film set - the archaeological history of the site already anticipates the post-apocalyptic subtext of the movie. To that extent, the Ritz is a synecdoche of the collapse of the Fordist system.

The second loaded scene is the sequence at the beginning where a chopper lands in a zombie resort town in Florida and a scientist steps out to hail survivors. The streets are littered with cardboard boxes, old newspapers and abandoned cars, the elegant buildings are distressed and dirty, the whole place has seen better days. And then the zombies start appearing. Parodic tourists dressed in loud Hawaiian shirts and idiotic sun hats, they converge on the chopper and force it to leave. This sequence was filmed in Fort Myers, Florida, a core city suffering from urban blight as a result of capital flight to the outer suburbs in the 80s. The film-makers did not have to do much to dress their set. History had done it for them.

Romero has said of Day of the Dead: "The community I had in the original script was always sort of representative of the new west or Florida, where cities now collapse in ten years instead of 200." He was also much more specific about the exact social composition of this community in his original script. One element which never made it into the finished film was the idea of a surplus human population living in sleazy fenced-in stalags reminiscent of Florida retirement condos. Described by Romero as a "cesspool of human dregs", its members are either used as slave labour or as fodder for the zombie soldiers. What is clear here is that the post-Fordist underclass has become completely detached as an unconscious political referent from the figure of the zombie. Now, it is simply referred to by the

grotesque fantasy of "human dregs". It is no surprise to learn that this hysterical outburst was revised for the film.

But the semiotic instability of the zombie was there from the beginning. One significant difference between Romero's Night of the Living Dead and Savini's remake is that Savini permits a multitude of conflicting explanations for the zombie plague, from chemical weapons to the hole in the ozone layer. This is something Romero wanted to do in the original, but he didn't have sufficient confidence in his audience and ran with a B-movie cliché about radiation from Venus. Co-writer John Russo has said: "At the time, every film we went to see in that genre had an explanation. It seemed that the masses couldn't live without some sort of explanation. So we gave them one." But the Fordist masses were not the individuals who would turn Night of the Living Dead into a cult hit on the midnight circuit. Did the film-makers really have such contempt for their audience?

The suspicion remains that Romero failed to understand the fascination of his zombies. But then, maybe so did his audience. By the time he came to make two sequels to Night of the Living Dead, he had no trouble casting his zombies: people would come from miles around for a chance to impersonate the living dead. Savini set up a make-up assembly line for applying masks and paint to the hundreds of zombie extras required for each film. A technician who worked on Day of the Dead has commented: "People would come and stay all night. It was something to do. Instead of going to a midnight showing of Rocky Horror, they'd come to the mall and be zombies." Who were these people? Members of a post-Fordist underclass eager to exhibit the signs of their abjection? An avantgarde generation of consumers mocking at the conformist habits of the past? Were they zombies or were they survivalists?

Maybe they were indeed the Fordist masses of Romero's fond imagining, come out for one last time to rehearse the spectacle of their own extinction by processing themselves through Savini's assembly lines. It would certainly fit the profile of Romero's career. He started out making commercials for US Steel, Alcoa, Heinz and Duke beer, outfits similar to those whose mass-produced commodities he would later trash in Dawn of the Dead. His production company, Image Ten, was set up in 1963 within earshot of Pittsburgh's declining steel mills, and occupied an ambivalent position in the economic fabric of the town. Parasitic upon the local branches of big Fordist companies for employment, it operated flexible post-Fordist labour practices and was staffed by a small 'family' of highly-skilled workers who treated the office as a home from home. It was within this makeshift environment that Night of the Living Dead was conceived, financed, filmed and edited. Schooled in selling corporations a flattering image of themselves, Romero took his revenge by defaming the reputation of the people they served.

'Night of the Living Dead' opens on 2 April and is reviewed on page 51 of this issue

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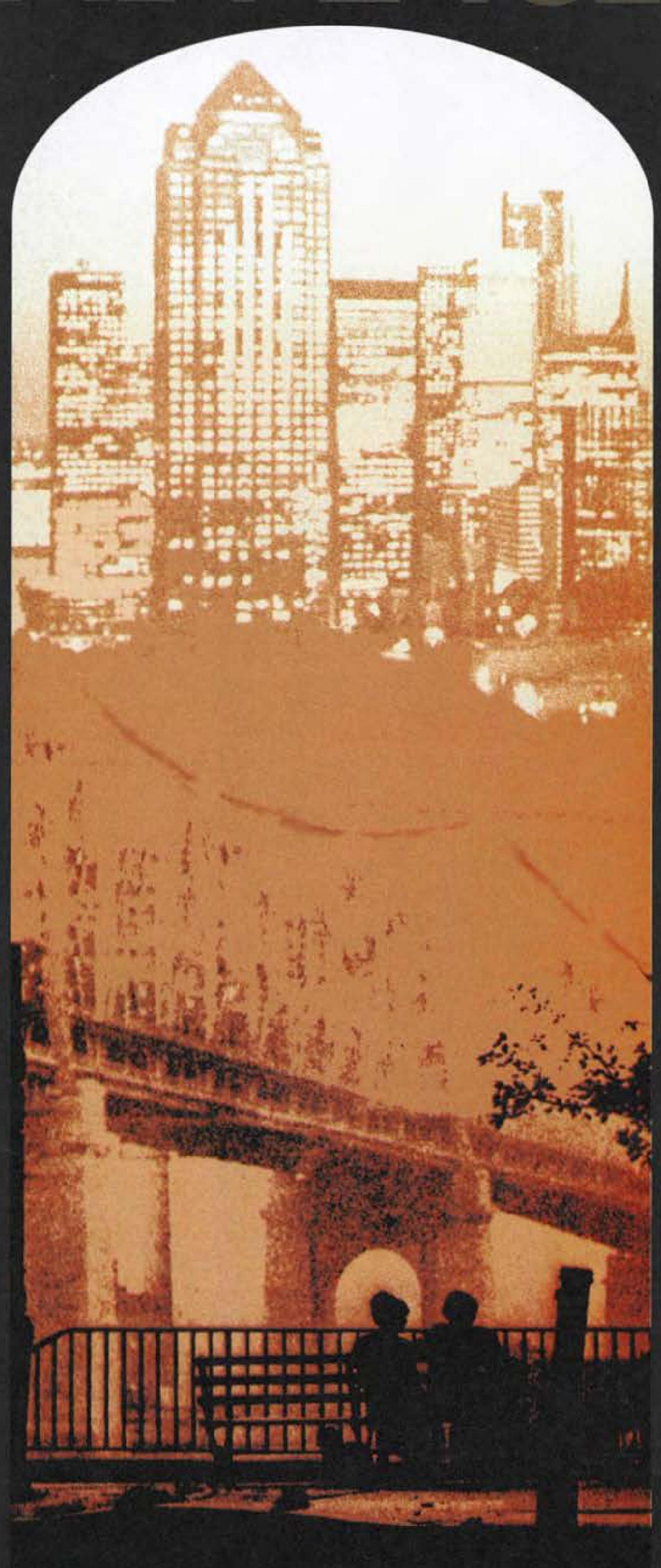












Phosphorescent milk

Twenty years ago, an impressionable youth, I read Truffaut's exchange with Hitchcock in which the latter famously describes the glass of milk Cary Grant takes upstairs in Suspicion: "I put a light right inside the glass because I wanted it to be luminous." On reading those words I experienced what psychologists call an apophany, an abnormal consciousness of significance. "I understood that the object contained a message for me, and I should decipher it" (Italo Calvino, If on a Winter's Night a Traveller).

Conscious effort was not the appropriate response to what was a summons to the unconscious. I proceeded by a kind of somnambulism. With the infinite patience of idleness, I collected quotes which seemed to elucidate or compound the mystery, jotting them down when I came upon them by chance in the course of my general reading. Poets (Rilke, Yeats, Cocteau, Jack Spicer), like mediums, claim to take dictation from an Outside. The unconscious is an Outside within us all. "The words found or discovered in a book are one level of a dictation" (Robin Blaser, The Practice of Outside). Objective corroboration by a host of disparate authors confirmed my unconscious hunch: Hitchcock's glass was luminous because its contents were numinous.

"The appearance of light without fire or

Cartoonist and songwriter
Peter Blegvad remembers
Hitchcock's 'Suspicion' – and the luminous milk with all its properties of light and dark

without heat is immediately imbued with a supernatural significance" (E. Newton Harvey, A History of Luminescence). When Hitchcock put a light inside the glass ("because I wanted [the audience] to think it was poisonous"), he produced a kind of anti-light, with properties normally associated with darkness. A cold, wet, colourless light, which hid more than it made visible.

This would not have been the case had the glass contained any other liquid - even such association-rich fluids as wine, blood, ink, oil or water. These are all outgoing, extrovert substances. In Cocteau's Orphée, Jean Marais takes dictation from the radio in Death's Rolls-Royce. One of the enigmatic transmissions he receives is the phrase: "a single glass of water illumines the world." A world lit by H₂O would be a daylight world of sparkling clarities, at the opposite end of the spectrum from the world a single glass of milk illumines with its anti-light: an inner world of shadows, where there is "more reality in what is hidden than in what is visible" (Gaston Bachelard, La Terre et les rêveries du repos).

Roland Barthes, in *Wine and Milk*, writes: "Wine is mutilating, surgical, it transmutes and delivers; milk is cosmetic, it joins, covers, restores. Moreover, its purity, associated with the innocence of the child, is a token

of strength which is not revulsive, not congestive, but calm, white, lucid, the equal of reality. Some American films, in which the hero, strong and uncompromising, did not shrink from having a glass of milk before drawing his avenging Colt, have paved the way for this new Parsifalian myth... milk remains an exotic substance."

Here Barthes presents milk in the beneficent guise promoted by dairies. But like whiteness, milk is antithetical. Beneath the surface guise of purity, innocence, strength and calm lies another milk, "phosphorescent from all its encounters with darkness" (Antonin Artaud). Just as "the deep secret of innocence is that it is also anxiety" (Kierkegaard), so the deep secret of milk is, in the words of French poet Jacques Audiberti, its "secret blackness". By putting a light in it. Hitchcock demonstrated that the seemingly innocuous stuff can be sinister, its cold glow radioactive after its long journey up from the depths, a chthonic "blood mystery", an occult narcotic, a photosensitive emulsion, a weird glue related to sperm and ectoplasm, its whiteness connoting not only innocence and purity, but also, like Moby Dick's, corruption and vacuity.

"The grail broken,

the light gone from the glass,

we would make it

anew." (Robert Duncan, Shadows)

"It is like a glass of milk. We need the glass and we need the milk." (John Cage, Lecture on Nothing)

"Return to a Place Lit by a Glass of Milk" (Charles Simic, title of a book of poems)

So what 'message', if any, did these bits and pieces (I must have amassed a couple of hundred over the years) enable me to extract from Hitchcock's glass? Its light confirmed that a process was under way, like the light on a switch when the current is flowing. Jung called the process "individuation", the psyche's instinctive striving for wholeness. He compared it to the alchemist's quest for the lapis or philosopher's stone: "the glass corresponds to the unum vas of alchemy and its contents to the living. semi-organic mixture from which the lapis, endowed with spirit and life will emerge" (C. G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy). Hitchcock's glass had become for me a symbol of the integrated psyche, its unconscious and conscious aspects reconciled.

I'm aware that many might find my obsession unbearably pretentious. "You saw all this in a glass of milk?" As a last defence, and bringing us back to cinema, I'll close with these words by Luis Bunuel, with which I'm passionately in accord: "...this same glass, contemplated by different beings, can be a thousand different things, because each one charges what he sees with effectivity; no one sees things as they are, but as his desires and his state of soul make him see. I fight for the cinema which will show me this kind of glass, because this cinema will give me an integral vision of reality. will broaden my knowledge of things and people, will open up to me the marvellous world of the unknown, of all that which find neither in the newspaper nor in the street." (Cinema Instrument of Poetry)



Secret blackness: Cary Grant in Hitchcock's 'Suspicion', with the deeply sinister glass of milk

Where angels fear to tread

David Robinson

Biopics loomed large in Berlin this year. The blockbuster exhibits, Danny De Vito's Hoffa and Spike Lee's Malcolm X, despite dedicated performances by their stars, both obscure their subjects under a mass of production and inadequate scripts. Even David Mamet, Hoffa's writer, can nod, it seems.

Derek Jarman's Wittgenstein provided an instructive antidote. With drastic simplification of means and dexterous wit, Jarman extracts the essence of Wittgenstein's eccentric life and complex thought. Jarman has always worked as a poet, using his imagination to infect the viewer's. Here, setting his characters against an infinite black background, he stimulates our imaginations to recreate for ourselves Vienna, Cambridge, Bloomsbury, war – far more vividly than any production designer could do. The film would have given Wittgenstein himself happy scope for linguistic investigation.

One of the most outstanding films was autobiographical – Mikhail Kalik's "memoir" And the Wind Returns. Kalik remains an extreme example of a career crushed by Soviet socialism. At least one of several films he made in the 60s, Goodbye Boys, is a masterpiece, but after being suppressed for a quarter of a century it remains little known. In 1971, unable to work any longer, Kalik managed to emigrate to Israel.

And the Wind Returns marks his own return, to St Petersburg and to creativity. The film relates his life story: growing up in a family of Jewish actors; nightmare years in a Siberian gulag after voicing feelings against the closure of the Yiddish theatre and the murder of Solomon Mikhoels; life at the Moscow Film School in the 50s; the intolerable pressures as his work is criticised for "pessimism" and "formalism", and anti-Semitism spreads.

The assured formal inventiveness of his earlier work is there in the new movie. The film moves freely in time, from the present of Kalik's return to Russia to the long-ago past, and assimilates old actuality material and quotations from his previous films, notably Goodbye Boys. The dramatic recreations of people from Soviet film history (Eisenstein, Yutkevitch, the party-line head of the film school, Groshchev) sometimes calls for footnotes, but there are memorable moments. The boy Kalik is taken by his father to the Alma Ata studios, where Ivan the Terrible is being shot. A slightly camp Eisenstein bends the giant actor Nikolai Cherkassov (a miraculous lookalike) to his will; while on the side good Russians maliciously whisper and spit over the baleful influence of the Jews.

Dusan Makavejev too makes an exhilarating return to form with Gorilla Bathes at Noon, which deals with his favourite comic theme: the mise en scène of the great socialist illusion. He reverts to the technique of Innocence Unprotected and W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism – his own special collage of objets trouvés. Principal among these are the last two reels of the extravagant Stalinist popular epic The Fall of Berlin and the demolition of a colossal statue of Lenin in East Berlin.

Makavejev builds these elements into the story of a Russian officer – the fruit of the romantic union blessed by Stalin himself in the grand finale of *The Fall of Berlin* – who was accidentally left behind when the Soviet armies withdrew from East Berlin. The film is a comic post-mortem on the 40 lost years of Communism.

The cataclysmic aftermath of the changes in Eastern Europe figured in several other Berlin films. Detlev Buck's (mildly) comic road movie No More Mr Nice Guy, which again features a 'lost' Russian soldier, finds a lot of its humour in the uneasy transformations of East German society. And Thierry Ravelet and Alain Ferrari's moving documentary Un Jour dans la mort de Sarajevo vividly evokes the dreadful reality of ethnic cleansing.

The current chaos and despair in Romania has inspired a new vein of pungent black comedy. The cinema-proprietor protagonist of Mircea Daneliuc's brutal farce The Conjugal Bed will do anything to earn dollars – work in porno films, sell babies or even go into politics. Lucian Pintilié's The Oak (already featured in several festivals last year) is a violent horror comic about the life of a young woman during the last throes of the Ceaucescu regime, facing the terrors of love and death, rape, both secret and not-so-secret police, and mortuaries where the freezers have broken down. Connoisseurs of Romanian verbal obscenity have a ball.

Berlin traditionally specialises in films on homosexual themes (not for nothing are its two main auditoria named after the most famous homosexuals in German cinema: Murnau and Fassbinder). Andrew Weeks and Ellen Fisher Turk's Split: William to Chrysis – Portrait of a Drag Queen is a hearteningly affectionate portrait of a chubby boy from the Bronx who transformed him-

'Kalik is taken by his father to the studios where 'Ivan the Terrible' is being shot. A camp Eisenstein bends the actor Nikolai Cherkassov to his will; while on the side good Russians spit over the baleful influence of the Jews'

self into the archetype of feminine glamour. As a courtesan Chrysis had a fling with Salvador Dali; eventually she died from cancer, a martyr to her breast implants.

Marc Huestis' Sex Is... is a wise and sombre debate on homosexuality in the age of Aids: "How can we continue to be vital sexual beings in the midst of death?" It is livened up with some hard-core embellishments which are perhaps unnecessary and risk losing the film the wider audience it deserves. Silverlake Life: The View From Here is a devastating portrait of a male couple dying, with undefeatable love and nobility, from Aids. The film was begun by one of the couple, Tom Joslin, and finished after his death by Peter Friedman. Paris Poirier's Last Call at Maud's is a nostalgic reminiscence of a San Francisco lesbian bar that helped its clients through decades of repression.

Notable shorts included Marlon Riggs' No Regret, in which five black gay men discuss their battle with Aids, and Isaac Julien's The Attendant, which realises the fantasies of a gallery attendant inspired by a painting called Scene on the Coast of Africa. Shown in the Forum of Young Cinema, Mark Rappaport's Rock Hudson's Home Movies is a witty exercise in cultural analysis, using film fragments to illuminate the disjuncture between Hudson's screen persona and his sexuality.

The sheer quantity of films made it impossible to see everything in the Forum of Young Cinema. But I would have no hesitation in passing on high recommendations for Atom Egoyan's Calendar, a low-budget essay on separation and the film-maker's Armenian heritage; Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick's documentary marathon Manufacturing Consent – Noam Chomsky and the Media; and for Adriana Aprà's film portrait Rossellini visto da Rossellini.



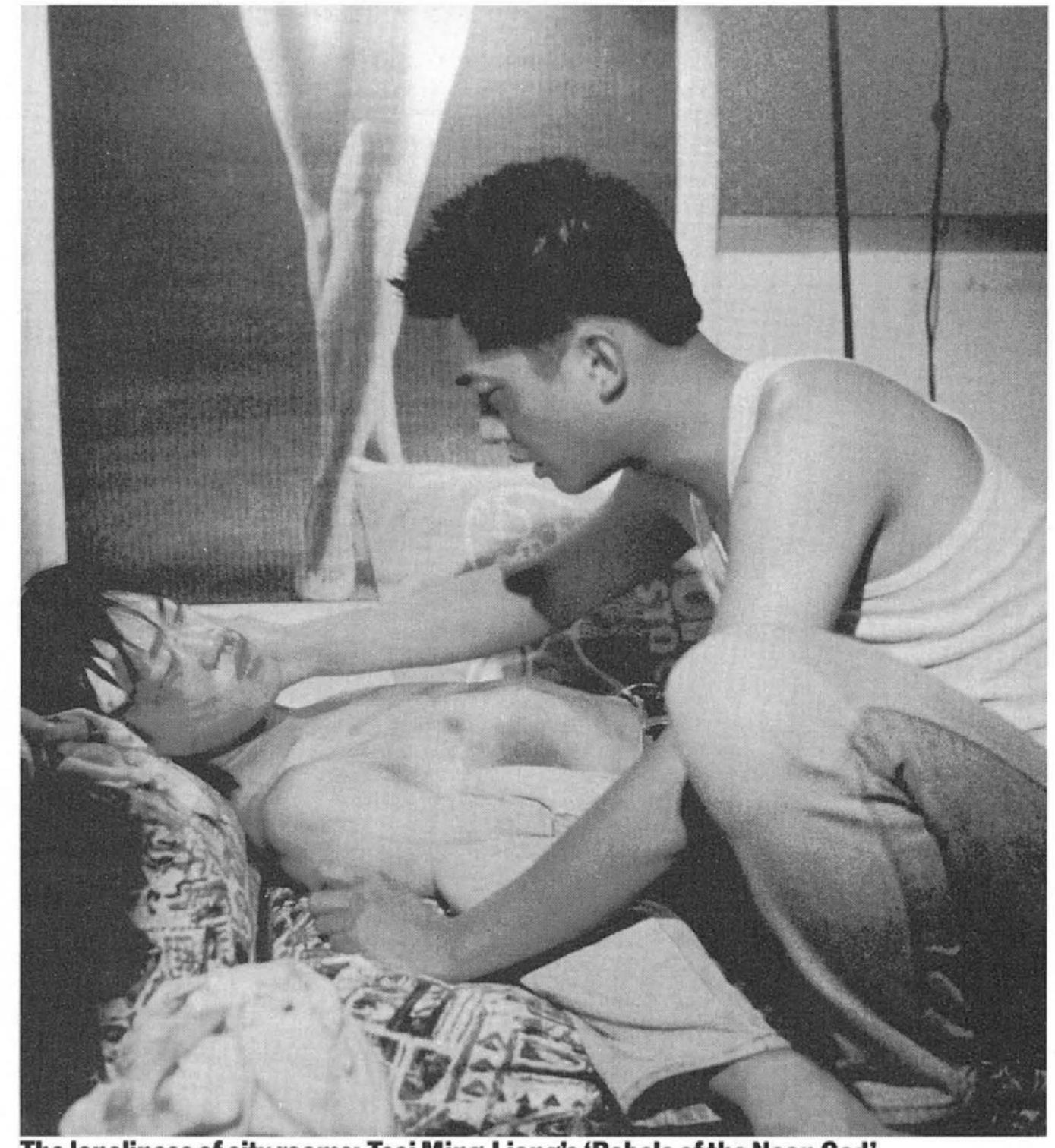
Tony Rayns

Unlike its chief rivals Cannes and Venice, which cling to dated and ever less tenable dreams of 'art cinema' and every year ritually lament the dearth of 'suitable' films, the Berlin Film Festival manages to represent the actual state of film-making around the world. Two obvious reasons for this come to mind. One is the diplomatic imperative: along with state funding comes the expectation that the festival will maintain a self-consciously 'liberal' stance, carefully balancing different national and political interests and paying lip-service to minorities of all stripes. The other is the presence of the invaluable Forum of Young Cinema as a key part of the festival structure; still true to its founding principles, the Forum goes into more areas where angels fear to tread than most festival programmers even know exist, and its explicit commitment to cutting-edge cinema sets a standard that the rest of the festival scrabbles to keep up with. Using this year's Berlinale as a measure, I can report that the screen characters who currently get audiences cheering are Asian gays, HIV-positive Caucasians, kids without hope, and crotchety old people. Truly, these are the good new days.

Of all the hundreds of movies that have tried to get inside the unguided-missile minds of lonely young men in crumbling inner cities, Rebels of the Neon God (Qing Shaonian Nezha) strikes me as the truest and most tender. I was alerted to director Tsai Ming-Liang's talent several years ago, when the critic Peggy Chiao showed me a tape of his Taiwan television film All Corners of the World (Hai Jiao Tian Ya). A drama about a dysfunctional family of ticketscalpers in Taipei's entertainment district, it showed exceptional skill in handling non-professional actors and hard-access locations.

But Rebels (Tsai's first feature) is more than merely talented or skilful. Using an absolute minimum of dialogue, it sets itself up as a study of father-son conflict but saves its keenest insights for the scenes in which the young protagonist leaves his parents and transfers his attention to a slightly older petty criminal, whom he views with a mixture of confused aggression and heroworship. Tsai finds matchless poetic images for the self-absorbed, masturbatory world of these young men, never limiting himself to the banalities of realism and building his story through intricate and suggestive cross-cutting. But the film's devastating formal beauty doesn't eclipse Tsai's sense of the undercurrents that run through these lives; he is alert to everything from the young men's latent homoerotic feelings to their half-sceptical belief in Chinese mythology. The film offers no social or psychological solutions, but it views the problems with the kind of warmth and engagement that was once unique to Fassbinder.

Rebels of the Neon God has no gay content as such (although its central love/hate gesture is the vandalising of a motorbike, which includes spraying it with the word 'Aids'), but it is probably not coincidental that it arrives with a wave of gay-themed



The loneliness of city rooms: Tsai Ming-Liang's 'Rebels of the Neon God'

movies from the Far East. 1992 was the year when Japan's gay men suddenly became visible, after a century and a half of conspiring in their own relegation to dark and undiscussed corners of society. In Berlin, though, their thunder was stolen by the Taiwanese-American director Ang Lee, whose marriage-of-convenience comedy *The Wedding Banquet (Xiyan)* wound up sharing the Golden Bear with an anodyne but well-acted art movie from China.

Lee's film, a crowd-pleaser of the order of *Strictly Ballroom*, finds a gay Taiwanese yuppie in Manhattan wedding a penniless art student from Shanghai; he needs to get his parents off his back, and she needs a Green Card. For an extended exercise in wishfulfilment, complete with a gratuitously sexy happy ending, *The Wedding Banquet* cuts surprisingly close to the bone of Chinese anti-gay prejudice. It avoids caricature, respects everyone's point of view and has a genuinely touching coming out scene. The director himself puts in a cameo appearance to assert that he set out to attack "5,000 years of sexual repression".

Interestingly, all three Japanese gay movies in Berlin insisted on seeing their gay male characters in relation to straight women. (Whether this is because Japanese directors are now where Dearden and Relph were when they made Victim or for some reason culturally specific to Japan is up for debate.) The films are squarely problem-oriented: the closeted young doctor in George Matsuoka's Twinkle (Kira Kira Hikaru) marries an alcoholic woman with low self-esteem and cannot hold together his affair with his student boyfriend; the young rent boy in Hashiguchi Ryosuke's Slight Fever of a 20-Year-Old (Hatachi no Binetsu) clings to a platonic girlfriend to convince himself he isn't gay, only to discover that her father is his client; the torrid lovers in Nakajima Takehiro's Okoge avail themselves of a helpful woman's bedroom while she curls up in her living room with her Frida Kahlo book.

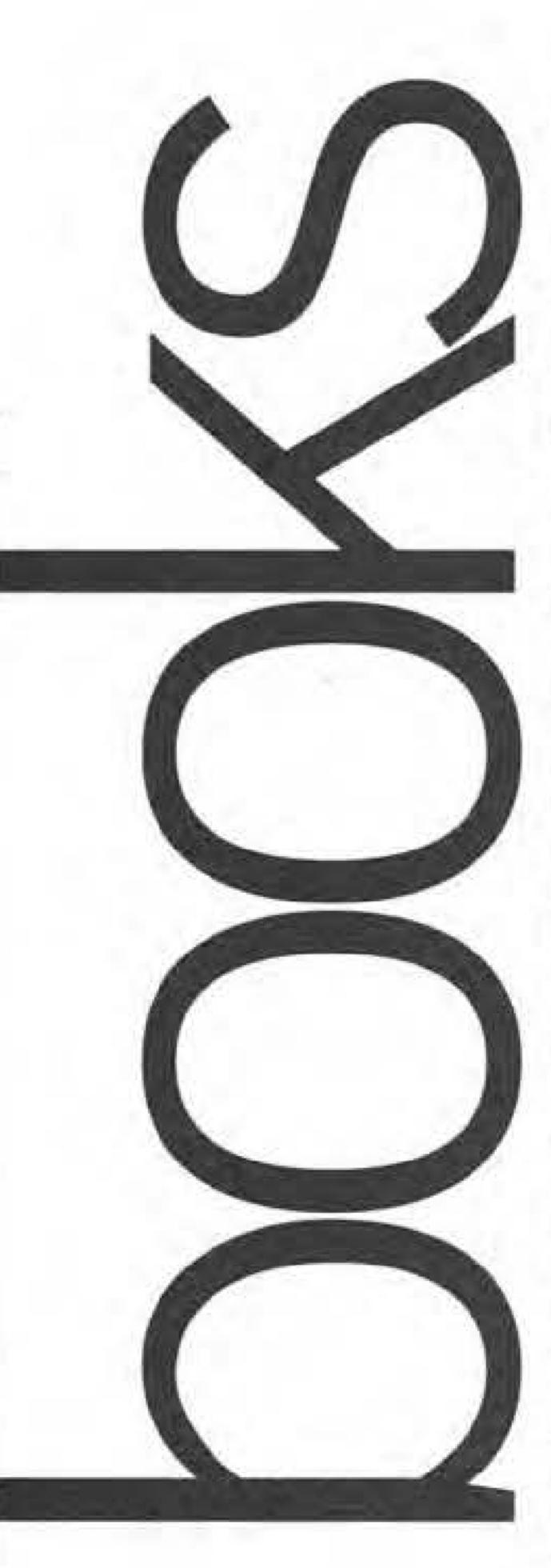
Okoge, made by a director twice the age of the other two, is the only one of these movies that achieves a plausible sense of the compromises and accommodations that are an integral part of Japanese gay life. Ironically, Japan has already produced the film-maker to put these nervous, recalcitrant movies into perspective: the young independent Oki Hiroyuki, whose work is not only openly gay but also radically subjective. Inexplicably, Oki was missing from the Berlin programme.

Savage Nights (Les Nuits fauves), which is sure to repeat its French success everywhere else it plays, does for HIV what Disney did for Ravel in Fantasia. In what is apparently a semi-autobiographical movie, Collard himself plays a sero-positive man who enjoys al fresco rough-trade orgies while maintaining sexual relations with both a teenage girl and a latently fascistic man. Politically incorrect to a fault, the film assaults audience expectations and screams to the four winds the agonies and perverse joys of living with Aids.

Alongside this, most accounts of heterosexual tribulations look timid. Sergei Bodrov's magical I Wanted to See Angels (Ja Chotela Uwidetj Angelow) cunningly evades the issue by seeing straight romance as one more broken promise of Moscow's night streets; the film is a Baudelairean glide through the city's weird subculture, centred on a would-be hit man who, at the age of 20, knows that he has already missed out on everything that matters. And Atom Egoyan's Calendar is witty enough to make a wry joke of its own obliqueness. Far less convoluted than previous Egoyan movies, it chronicles the break-up of a marriage between a photographer and his translator wife during a working trip to Armenia, but complicates matters by foregrounding questions of language, national identity and emotional empathy while pushing pain and politics into some off-screen void where, of course, they echo.

The Forum also did useful work in saluting the resilience of the New Chinese Cinema in the wake of China's lurch to the left. A five-film series highlighted the work of two women directors, Li Shaohong and Ning Ying. Li showed her last two films, Bloody Morning (Xuese Qingchen, an adaptation of Marquez' Chronicle of a Death Foretold fully rethought in Chinese terms) and Family Portrait (Sishi Bu Huo, from an original script by Liu Heng): one rural, one urban, both sociologically exact, cinematically literate and emotionally complex. Ning showed her second feature For Fun (Zhao Le), in which a retired stage doorman from the Peking Opera joins other pensioners in an amateur opera troupe but cannot unlearn the fractious bossiness that went with his old job. Li Shaohong's films are superb by any standards, and Ning Ying's has the kind of charm and humour last seen in movies from the Prague Spring. I guess things really are looking up in Beijing.

'Of all the hundreds of movies that have tried to get inside the unguided-missile minds of lonely young men, 'Rebels of the Neon God' strikes me as the truest and most tender'



Memory lapse

Howard Schuman

Screening History

Gore Vidal, André Deutsch, £12.99, 96pp

This slim, overpriced volume appears at first glance to be a collection of three essays dealing with the effect of movies on Gore Vidal's sense of history. It is and it isn't. In fact, Screening History originated as a group of lectures given by Vidal at Harvard University, part of the Massey American Civilization series, from which Eudora Welty's wonderful One Writer's Beginnings (Faber and Faber) also emerged. Unlike Welty and Faber, however, Vidal and his publishers fail to acknowledge explicitly the provenance of his book. Nor has he followed Welty's honourable example by reworking the lectures into coherent essays. This laziness and evasion are all too characteristic of Screening History as a whole.

The first third of Lecture One, 'The Prince and the Pauper', lurches aimlessly through quips about ahistorical America (the United States of Amnesia), a glimpse of Vidal's first visit to a movie theatre (he talked back to the actress on the screen as he walked down the aisle...), a glancing reference to how the Gulf War was stage-managed for CNN, some quick family sketches (aviation-industry dad, vodka-swigging flapperesque mother, beloved blind senator grandfather), which subsequently give way to a defence of his novel Washington DC, in which he fictionalised his political tribe. And then - as if realising he's been behaving like an ageing jazz musician desperately riffing, trying to find his way back to the tune - Vidal announces his theme in ringing tones: "So let us examine the way in which one's perceptions of history were - and are - dominated by illustrated fictions of great power, particularly those screened in childhood." At last he's getting down to it - or is he?

Vidal tells us that his most intense movie-going phase was between 1932 and 1939 and paints disarming portraits of the movie houses of his youth ("and the gum beneath the seats was always fresh Dentyne, a flavour new that year"). He reminds us that an inordinate amount of European history was produced by Hollywood in the 30s, but that apart from Westerns, almost no US history hit the screens. Why were the moguls, many of whom had escaped from European poverty, so anxious to green-light projects recreating the histories of the countries they'd left behind? Vidal avers he learned lasting history lessons from Hollywood, but how did he evolve from the kitsch of DeMille's The Crusades or Schoedsack's The Last Days of Pompeii to writing his fine historical novel Julian, or to acquiring knowledge about the real Crusades 'equal' to that of the great historian Sir Steven Runciman? He does not linger long enough on any of these pieces of information to enlighten us.

It comes as a relief when Vidal settles down for a while to explain his attraction to Warner Bros' version of Mark Twain's Tudor melodrama, The Prince and the Pauper. Twain's tale imagined the future Edward IV changing places with his pauper double, mingling with the masses, being taken captive, nearly killed in a wood, but being returned to his throne in the nick of time, thinner

but wiser about the disadvantages of being a member of the underclass. Vidal claims that the film encouraged his interest in English history, heightened his awareness of the Depression and the plight of contemporary paupers (Vidal was now almost a prince himself, his mother having remarried, this time to a rich stockbroker) and gave him his first insight into death as notbeing when the Prince almost snuffs it.

None of this rings true. Why would a 30s movie addict need a historical Boy's Own adventure to give him a sense of the Great Depression when it permeated myriad Hollywood films from Gold Diggers of 1933 to I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang? Not to mention the newsreels that accompanied those films. And as for his flash about the meaning of death, it seems unlikely he had not already seen Shirley Temple and other movie brats facing mortal danger.

No, the impact this film had upon young Gore seems more to do with his attraction to Billy and Bobby Mauch, the twin stars, who were "cute as a pair of bug's ears". Having admitted how cute the Mauches were, Vidal frantically backpeddles into an incoherent discussion of his fascination with twinship, the search for wholeness. He says, "I wanted to be myself twice," only to reverse it a few paragraphs later: "I wished I were either one of them, one of them mind you. I certainly did not want to be two of me." Something deliciously psycho-sexual is going on here which no amount of verbal camouflage can disguise.

Vidal is impartial – he treats every subject with equal superficiality. Lecture Two, for instance, promises to widen the Vidalian scope. "I have spent the last year screening not only movies but newsreels from the 30s and 40s, partly in preparation for these meditations and partly to make sense to myself why we were what we were and did what we did." He informs us that the battlelines between isolationists and interventionists were being drawn in newsreels in the run-up to the Second World War, but fails to tell us how. He seems to be embarking on a useful analysis of the monthly film documentary The March of Time, which "screened the world through the imperial American eyes of Christ-loving, red-fearing, people-hating Henry Luce."

But true to form, this insight peters out into a faintly amusing anecdote concerning Vidal père's appearance in one issue of The March of Time trying to explain how he – as President Roosevelt's Secretary of Aviation – had come to convert a British island in the Pacific into an American air base without the knowledge of Great Britain. And that's all, folks; soon we're off again, back to "90-minute entertainments" and a look at late-30s pro-Britain propaganda fictions, epitomised most famously by Alexander Korda's Fire Over England.

Vidal's discussion of Fire Over England simply reiterates what any movie buff already knows: in this rousing Elizabethan epic, Philip of Spain stands in for Hitler, Flora Robson as Gloriana represents English civilisation in peril and Laurence Olivier is indomitable EveryBrit. Otherwise, our lecturer reaches the uncontroversial conclusion that films like Fire Over England and That Hamilton Woman were designed to melt the brains and hearts of Americans towards little Britain. But Vidal states, quite accurately, that the majority of Americans remained

isolationist until Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. Which seems to contradict one of his main points: "Through eye and ear we are both defined and manipulated by fictions of such potency that they are able to replace our own experience." The central thesis, that movie reality is stronger than experience, is never proved.

Screening History is a catalogue of missed opportunities and fuzzy thinking, as well as teasing sexual evasion. Vidal raises the spectre of pederasty at prep school and later allmale desire in an isolated army unit, but, as with his crush on the Mauch twins, he conjures up homoeroticism only to run away from it, like a small boy who has burnt his fingers on a flame. Although these lectures are sprinkled with familiar bitchy wit ("a narcissist is someone more attractive than you are"), they seem not to have been created by Gore Vidal at all but by one of his anagrams: Large Void.

Social codes

David Caute

Film and Politics in America: A Social Tradition Brian Neve, Routledge, £11.99, 285pp

Brian Neve's book begins by promising emphasis on a group within the generation of American film directors and writers born between 1906 and 1917 who made their passage to Hollywood via the red-hot radicalism of the New York theatre of the 30s, with the Depression, fascism and the war providing their "formative experiences". But as soon as the names come up - Elia Kazan, Orson Welles, Joseph Losey, Abraham Polonsky, Nicholas Ray, Robert Rossen, John Huston, Edward Dmytryk and Jules Dassin among them - one realises that this "group" was more a loose constellation of major and minor planets in separate orbits. with occasional convergences and collisions. Neve offers a somewhat problematic unifying factor: "A tendency to define their artistic aspirations in social terms." The result is several narratives searching uneasily for co-existence.

Neve then breaks his own tentative mould with a long discussion of Frank Capra, a director from an earlier generation whose affection for an honest, hard-working, idealistic middle America offset realistic problems with imaginary solutions. By the time Kazan, Losey and Rossen were reaching out to the Communist Party, Capra was gently recoiling from the bureaucratic implications of the New Deal. The bridge is flimsy. Neve is clearly more at



Red scare: Vladimir Sokoloff as Kalinin in 'Mission to Moscow', right, one of the wartime pro-Soviet films picked on by HUAC



Down memory lane: Dirk Bogarde recalls camping it up in black leather in 'The Singer Not the Song'

home with political content than with artistic form, and most of his film-descriptions are script synopses rather than evocations of the visual experience of cinema. Even in his extended discussions of Kazan's Viva Zapata! and On the Waterfront, camerawork, decor and cutting tend to be bypassed. The exception is his excellent evocation of America America, which reveals the cinematic sensibility concealed elsewhere. One by-product of Neve's aesthetic reticence is a blurring of the immense gap in talent and achievement separating the films of Kazan and Welles from the workmanlike but genre-ridden scripts characteristic of the Hollywood Left.

Indeed, the Hollywood studios were less resistant to social message than to the demonically gifted auteurs who ran over budgets and shooting schedules, then fought the studio executives all the way to the theatre. The auteurs demanded the relative freedom they had enjoyed with the Group Theater or the Federal Theater Project, while Losey and other radicals travelled from New York to Hollywood like ballet dancers enlisting in the marines. Arriving at MGM, Losey wrote a bitter memo comparing his own servitude there to Kazan's privileges at Fox. While Kazan was able to work with first-class writers, Losey did not lay his hands on a script of genuine literary quality throughout the 30s and 40s.

The central paradox is how many of the 'progressive' writers quickly forgot Brechtian expressionism and the avant-garde Soviet theatre, readily absorbed the studios' rules about film genres, and transmitted their message with less subtlety than Western Union. But was it paradoxical? Neverightly mentions the influence of radio on this generation of angry, talented messenger-boys; if one looks at Losey's agit-propradio plays for NBC in 1943, or his short

film documentaries, propaganda already has art in a submission hold.

Obviously this generation became the principal target of the blacklist after 1947, and Neve would have been wrong to ignore it (even if this subject is beginning to suffer from over-exposure). He cites the oft-quoted survey by Dorothy Jones, Communism in the Movies, which showed how social themes reached their Hollywood peak in 1947, receded slightly during the minor blacklist of the late 40s, then almost vanished with the onset of McCarthyism. The blacklist silenced or exiled many of Neve's group. But HUAC was more interested in purging people than scripts - although, as Neve points out, the committee loved to equate the New Deal with Communism, and made capital out of the pro-Soviet films of the war years such as Michael Curtiz's Mission to Moscow. But as the purge perfected its own mechanism, it was all about names and guilt-byassociation. A name became a name only when named before HUAC: congressional proceedings carried immunity from libel. Despite the ideological row over a scene from Losey's The Boy with Green Hair, at a time when he was already shadowed and bugged by the FBI as a Party member, he was able to continue to work without adverse personal publicity until he was subpoenaed by HUAC three years later.

This is a thoughtful and conscientious book, strong on information, strong on politics, weaker on film style than on peripheral context, inclined to subordinate the critical function to the encyclopaedic, and too much dominated by those twin lords of misrule, the index card and the thumbnail sketch. The notion of 'social' is surely overelastic when extended to discussions of A Place in the Sun and The Caine Mutiny, while allowing only a few lines for Welles' minor masterpiece, The Trial. I would have liked more about less.

Voices of Britain

Sue Harper

Sixty Voices: Celebrities Recall the Golden Age of British Cinema

Brian McFarlane (ed), BFI Publishing, £35 (hb), £14.95 (pb), 260pp

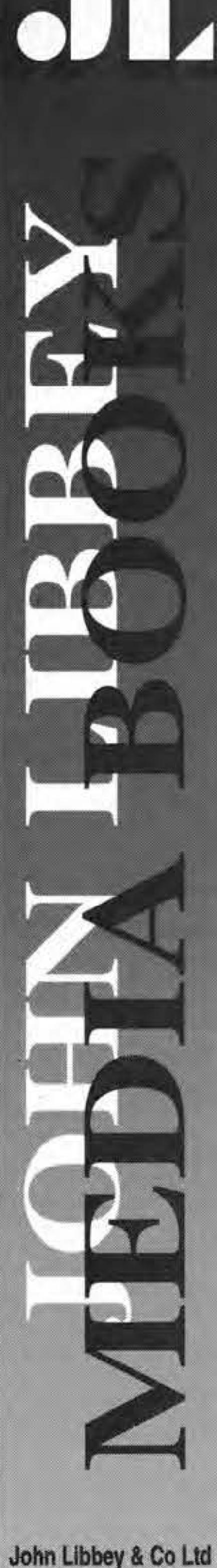
Brian McFarlane's series of interviews with workers in the British film industry during the 40s and 50s provides clear documentation. The questions are well conceived and the illustrations particularly apposite. The material on under-researched characters is welcome, and the range of personnel helps us to construct a more comprehensive account of the period and to recognise the collaborative nature of the medium.

So far so good. But Sixty Voices is beset by the problems that assail all oral histories. As a form of enquiry, oral history seems to be 'written from below'; it is liable to sentimental interpretations, in which unofficial voices are presented as uttering the 'true facts'. And although memory is selective, recall is a rule-based activity. A distinction needs to be drawn between loosely constructed reveries and carefully directed interviews, each informed by different oral traditions and rhythms. Unless the sample of interviewees is evenly distributed along axes of gender, class, locale and profession, the selection appears unbalanced. And chance is a determining factor; the probity of the account depends on who has died inconveniently early, who was well disposed on a sunny day, and who had lunched not wisely but too well. Moreover, the means of transmission affect the message. Written interviews suffer in comparison with televised ones, in which non-verbal forms of communication carry information; the languages of movement, gaze, coughs and even pauses all modify the meaning of the spoken word. The recent indepth television interviews with Billy Wilder on BBC 2's Arena are an excellent example of this.

Sixty Voices operates within a recognised convention of transcribed interviews in which phatic or paralinguistic elements are rarely acknowledged. It stands up well in comparison to such classic interview books as Jon Halliday's Sirk on Sirk, but is limited by its allegiance to celebrities - more than half the interviews are with actors. Of course, it is intriguing to learn how it felt to be directed by Leslie Arliss or Michael Powell, or that Dirk Bogarde, attired in black leather and astride a white horse in The Singer Not the Song, "did the whole thing for camp". But some of the 'star' evidence seems inconsequential. It might have been more valuable to hear from uncelebrated workers in the industry than to witness the hilarious reticence of Deborah Kerr or the churlish arrogance of Stewart Granger.

The interviews with producers and directors are more fruitful for historians. They provide information on neglected areas such as art direction and costume design, and yield useful insights into the varieties of mainstream film practice. From this evidence, distinctions can be drawn between those, like the Boultings, who despised the studio system, and those, like Roy Ward Baker, who thought there was "no point in making films for your 12 friends in Hampstead." The work of Val Guest, Lewis

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◄ Gilbert and Ralph Thomas is at last accorded sustained attention, and some of the interviews fill important gaps: for example, those with Ronald Neame and Anthony Havelock-Allan add substantially to our knowledge about Cineguild. Orthodox histories tend to discount the contribution of women to the production process, so the interviews with Betty and Muriel Box provide a healthy corrective. Of course, what is not said is often as important as what is: John Davis' account of the demise of Independent Producers Ltd is disingenuous, to say the least.

While Sixty Voices provides valuable insights into the intentions of film-makers, we should always be wary, as D. H. Lawrence reminds us, of the "authorial thumb in the pan". The film text itself inevitably surpasses the meanings grafted on to it by its progenitors; and the film historian needs to balance other kinds of evidence against the ipse dixit.

Black eyes

Karen Alexander

Black Looks: Race and Representation

bell hooks, Turnaround Press, £8.99, 200pp

Introducing her latest book, bell hooks quotes the Senegalese writer and filmmaker Ousmane Sembène on the subject of his film Camp Thiaroye: "For people like us, there are no such things as models. We are called upon to constantly create our models. Colonialism means that we must always rethink everything." In Black Looks, it is the image and its potential for transformation in music, advertising and fashion as well as film - that is the focus of such radical rethinking. The recurrent theme in this collection of essays is the mass media's denial of the existence of a critical black female subjectivity, a topic that some might be tempted to dismiss as passe. For hooks, such a view is part and parcel of the system that perpetuates our subjugation.

Cinema is central to hooks' project "to interrogate old narratives and suggest alternative ways to look at blackness and black subjectivity - and, of necessity, whiteness." Her arguments are challenging and forcefully put, but there is generous space for disagreement; the experience of reading Black Looks is one of constant immersion in a face-to-face, or voice-to-voice exchange. The author provides the premises and context of her argument while it is being made, so that faced with contentious analyses of films as diverse, for instance, as Imitation of Life and Paris Is Burning, we are obliged in turn to examine the grounds of our objections. A downside to these situated readings is that hooks does not need to take account of the circumstances of every other reader. It is frustrating for me, for example, that she does not identify which version of Imitation of Life disturbed her and her sister so deeply when they saw it as children.

We can share hooks' conviction that the primary task is to construct the terms for a radical black female spectatorship, and still be left with the feeling that to disagree with her readings is to fail in one's duty. Her oppositional stance towards mainstream Hollywood films such as Imitation of Life or Heart Condition and promotion of progres-

sive black independent film-making tend to exclude less confrontational responses. In 'The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators', for instance, she deals exclusively with the pleasures of deconstruction. Black women on this side of the Atlantic, however, grew up with comparatively few black images with which to engage critically. So while the young hooks and her sister were rejecting images they found too painful to look at, her Caribbean cousins here consumed them with naive wonder, not necessarily through a misguided desire to embrace white supremacist ideology, but to enjoy the 'simple' pleasures of looking.

Hooks is at her strongest when confronting white supremacism, as in the provocative essay 'Eating the Other', where she playfully reminds us of the slang meaning of 'a bit of the other' before challenging the 'progressive' desire of white males for black women or men. Rather than a liberalisation of attitudes towards nonwhite people, this is seen as an example of Otherness representing the locus of a more intense pleasure than does one's own race, thus leaving white supremacy intact. Hooks' critique is at its most incisive when it focuses on issues of desire. An essay about Madonna contains this axiomatic insight: "White folks who do not see black pain never really understand the complexity of black pleasure."

The complexity of black pleasure becomes evident in several of hooks' readings. If her take on super-model Naomi Campbell is rather one-dimensional as a critique of white male pleasure, her piece on the films of Oscar Micheaux, 'Celebrating Blackness', is more subtle: "Micheaux, fascinated by what I call 'a politics of pleasure and danger,' focused... on racialised sexual politics as they informed the construction and expression of desire between black heterosexual couples, as well as interracial sexual bondings... Focusing on womanising and vamping, Micheaux's work 'exploits' conventional constructions of good and bad sexuality as he simultaneously 'toys' with the idea of transgression."

Hooks' readings of black independent films, both British and American, are perceptive, and her analysis of Hollywood's subordinating and colonising strategies is illuminating as well as scathing. But it is not only for what she has to say on the subject of cinema and race that *Black Looks* is so effective. Her oppositional gaze is never more unsettling than when it is turned on her readers, becoming a powerful model for our rethinking our own sense of why and how we look.

Situation comedy

Amanda Lipman

Levinson on Levinson

David Thompson (ed), Faber and Faber, £8.99, 170pp

The latest subject of Faber's directors series is the US independent-turned-mainstream Barry Levinson. In a series of conversations with David Thompson – presented as a monologue interspersed with editorial notes – Levinson is chattily autobiographical, though less analytical than others in the series. There's a reason for this: while the likes of Schrader, Scorsese or Cronen-



Communication breakdown:
Danny DeVito in Levinson's
'Tin Men', a film that plays
with macho dynamics in
male relationships

berg consider themselves auteurs, Levinson is what Thompson rather flatteringly terms "a throwback to the classy studio director". Nevertheless, Levinson does try to have his cake and eat it by working up a directorial identity through his loose trilogy of Baltimore films: Diner, Tin Men and Avalon. Not only is he most inspired when discussing these "personal" movies – written around his own experiences or those of his family – but he uses them to bring together the areas of film-making that he claims interest him most strongly.

First there is the Levinson trademark: his engagingly naturalistic dialogue, which is at its sharpest in *Diner*. Explains Levinson: "My feeling has always been that dialogue is in fact action if you handle it correctly." To accentuate the semi-documentary feel of conversation, he reveals, he would use two cameras on a scene simultaneously, giving an added immediacy and veracity to cutting and reaction shots. The three films also deal loosely with Levinson's avowed thematic interest: communication. While Diner and Tin Men both play wickedly with the way macho dynamics lead to frustrated relationships, Avalon looks at how communication within the family has deteriorated in the increasingly insular, television-

Of course, these concerns are not confined to the Baltimore films and Levinson offers many examples of the way they percolate those he directed but did not write. In *Good Morning, Vietnam*, for example, Robin Williams was allowed to improvise in a way his real-life counterpart DJ Adrian Cronauer never did; in *Rain Man*, it was Levinson's idea to make Dustin Hoffman's autistic character use comedy seriously to indicate his inability to communicate.

bound twentieth century.

As Thompson points out, Levinson can be sentimental – as the worst moments of *The Natural* and *Rain Man* demonstrate. But for the most part, his films have an ironic undertone sparked off by situation and unfolding through the dialogue. So perhaps it's not entirely surprising to learn that he cut his teeth as a comedy writer, working with Marty Feldman, Carol Burnett and Mel Brooks.

There are no great struggles to reach the top in the Barry Levinson story. Mulling over the unexpected success of Good Morning, Vietnam, he comments: "So now I'm a big commercial union director whereas before I was labelled as a kind of fringe director. It's funny and strange." By his own admission, Levinson has enough hard-

◄ nosed practicality to enable him to slip easily into the commercial world – having deplored the studios' lack of confidence in "personal" movies like Avalon, he concedes that he understands why they would rather make RoboCop.

While he comes over as affable, modest and breezily readable, Levinson is never passionate. Even remarks about the personal films are measured, while the nearest he gets to invective is a muted defence of his liberal political position against Pauline Kael's accusation of Reaganism. Perhaps this has some bearing on why it is becoming harder to get excited about a Barry Levinson movie. Even Levinson himself seems to have less to say about his most recent films: he enthuses over James Toback's bristling script and the quality of the acting in Bugsy (undoubtedly its best features); he enthuses about the extravagant design in Toys. But somewhere along the way he seems to have forgotten that there's more to movie-making than this.

It's interesting to discover that Toys which he co-wrote with his first wife Valerie Curtin - was set to be his first project, before it was shelved by Fox. It certainly begs the question of whether, directed by a younger, less successful Levinson, it would have been different from the turgid, sentimental affair it has become. Because despite any number of interesting stories in this book, and despite Levinson's past credentials, there's a whiff of complacency here. Thompson does his best to convince us of Levinson's talent, but it's all nostalgic stuff. And at the point at which the story should come full circle and reclaim its old magic, sadly, it reads more like an unwavering descent into mediocrity.

No drama

Andrew Higson

New Australian Cinema: Sources and Parallels in American and British Film

Brian McFarlane and Geoff Mayer, Cambridge University Press, £35 (hb), £11.95 (pb), 259pp

McFarlane and Mayer's book is a useful, if flawed, addition to recent academic work on national cinemas. The subtitle is significant – there is as much, if not more, about Hollywood and Britain here as there is about Australia. Historically, Hollywood has played a formative role in our understanding of what constitutes cinema; to neglect its relationship to other national movements can give rise to some misleading conclusions.

The authors are interested both in what makes new Australian cinema unique, and in the ways it draws on pre-existing cinematic traditions. The first section deals with the influence of classical Hollywood narrative on recent Australian films. The argument follows the lines promoted by David Bordwell et al in Classical Hollywood Cinema and Narration in the Fiction Film, but inflects this with the contention that classical Hollywood narratives draw heavily on the conventions of melodrama, with its polarised dramatic and moral structures.

McFarlane and Mayer claim that "The Australian cinema has maintained an ambivalent attitude to this narrative system, rarely fully embracing it or alternative

narrative systems." Instead of following the more familiar line that other national cinemas simply mimic Hollywood, the authors berate new Australian cinema for the failure of so many of its films to follow through the melodramatic implications of their narratives and to meet audience expectations.

The second section compares the formation of new Australian cinema with attempts to build a viable national cinema in Britain in the 40s and 50s. In contrast to the previous section, an effort is made to identify the distinctive characteristics of Australian and British films. These include a pictorialist and/or realist mise en scène; loose episodic narratives with a concomitant emphasis on character, atmosphere, place - and authenticity - rather than narrative action and resolution; and a preference for adaptations which serves to align cinema with an established and prestigious indigenous literary tradition. McFarlane and Mayer also note a number of films which go out of their way to imagine Australia as a national community with unique cultural traits - but it is surely wrong to assume, as they seem to, that American movies do not also explore what it is to be American and promote ideas of American national identity.

Another of the characteristics of new Australian - but also British - cinema which McFarlane and Mayer identify is the refusal of what they call "full-blown melodrama". Here a problem arises, because whereas the logic of the first section is to see this as a failure, the second sees it as a deliberate aesthetic strategy intended precisely to establish difference from the classical model. Whereas the first section is premised on the idea that to be popular, Australian cinema must meet the genre expectations of the mainstream audience, the second describes something closer to a middle-class art cinema. Given the elitist assumptions of this cinema, it is surely inevitable that the moral certainties, dramatic structures and climactic resolutions of melodrama are treated with suspicion rather than wholeheartedly embraced in recent Australian films. It might therefore have made more sense to look more closely at movies such as John Duigan's One Night Stand or Jane Campion's Sweetie which have ended more equivocally on images of pain, powerlessness, alienation or defeat - images which, as McFarlane and Mayer note, have been explored by Graeme Turner in National Fictions: Literature, Film and the Construction of the Australian Narrative as important elements in Australian cultural traditions.

The unevenness of the book manifests itself in other ways. At times, the author of section two repeats material that has been adequately covered in section one. At other times, he uses quite different modes of textual analysis - Bordwell seems to have been jettisoned, for instance. It is odd, too, that similarities between new Australian cinema and European art cinema, which might have provided a third context, are noted without being followed through. But the authors are clearly more fascinated by American melodrama and British cinema. The detailed material on three American melodramas seems unnecessary, while much of the discussion of British cinema (with the exception of the section on popular melodrama) is either too familiar or in urgent need of revision.

Making a difference: new Australian images in Jane Campion's 'Sweetie'



Malcolm X: The Great Photographs

Text by Thulani Davis, Stewart, Tabori & Chang, £30 (hb), £14.99 (pb), 167pp A fascinating and beautifully produced account of Malcolm X between 1960 and his death in 1965, told through striking black and white photographs. Those taken by journalists for the press are offset by others taken by the likes of Eve Arnold and Henri Cartier Bresson, and by Robert Haggins and Gordon Parks, whom Malcolm X entrusted with the task of providing alternative coverage to that of the white media. Davis' introduction examines the legend and the reality of this icon of black politics, placing him in historical context, and the book includes a detailed chronology of his life and work.

The Politics of Popular Representation:

Reagan, Thatcher, AIDS, and the Movies

Kenneth MacKinnon, Associated University Presses, £26.95, 257pp

A study of US and British politics during the 80s which uses popular English-language movies of the last two decades as evidence of the influence of the right on our conceptions of the family and sexuality. MacKinnon argues that New Right and Christian fundamentalist thinking profoundly affected social attitudes towards Aids, creating a health disaster which hardly surfaced in the movies, except obliquely in horror films. According to MacKinnon, the Aids imagery in 80s popular movies provides testimony to the phobia that helped to produce the health crisis.

Filmmaking by the Book: Italian Cinema and Literary Adaptation

Millicent Marcus, The Johns Hopkins University Press, £36.50 (hb), £12 (pb), 313pp

In this scholarly work, Marcus draws on semiotics, psychoanalysis and feminism to explore the relationship between literary narrative and cinematic discourse in Italian cinema. She looks at key works by Visconti, De Sica, Pasolini, Fellini and the Taviani brothers to demonstrate how these cinematic imaginations transform literary texts in the interests of resolving individual artistic problems. Case studies include *La terra trema*, *The Leopard*, *Two Women*, *The Gospel According to St Matthew* and the *Decameron*.

MGM: When the Lion Roars

Peter Hay, Virgin Publishing, £36, 335pp
A lavishly produced history of MGM's golden era between 1925 and 1959. Hay has trawled the archives of the Academy Foundation to provide an inside look at legendary figures such as Louis B. Mayer and Irving Thalberg, costume designer Adrian, production designer Cedric Gibbons, producer David O. Selznick, directors King Vidor and Minnelli, and many other artists and technicians. The volume also includes profiles of the studio's greatest stars.

Etienne-Jules Marey: A Passion for the Trace François Dagognet, translated by Robert Galeta with Jeanine Herman,

The MIT Press, £24.25, 204pp
A study of inventor Marey (1830-1904), an influential figure in the history of photography. His sophisticated techniques for recording motion coincided with new ideas about the relationship between the body and the machine. Henri Bergson, Futurism and Marcel Duchamp were all indebted to his scientific philosophy. The book, which includes a bibliography and index, is illustrated by stunning and rare black and white photographs.

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Accidental Hero

USA 1992

Director: Stephen Frears

Certificate Distributor Columbia TriStar **Production Company** Columbia Pictures **Executive Producer** Joseph M. Caracciolo Producer Laura Ziskin **Associate Producer** Sandy Isaac **Production Supervisor** Bonnie Arnold **Production Co-ordinator** Shari Leibowitz **Unit Production Manager** Joseph M. Caracciolo **Location Managers** Amy Ness Stephen Andrzejewsk Casting Howard Feuer Juliet Taylor **Assistant Directors** Louis D'Esposito Nina Kostroff-Noble David Hallinan Karyn McCarthy Screenplay David Webb Peoples Story Laura Ziskin Alvin Sargent David Webb Peoples Director of Photography Oliver Stapleton Colour Technicolor Camera Operator George Kohut 24 Frame Videos & Graphic Displays Video Image: Rhonda C. Gunner Richard E. Hollander Gregory L. McMurry John C. Wash Supervisor: David M. Hofflich Technical Supervisor: Steve Howard Technical Director: Douglas Degrazzio **Special Visual Effects** Dream Quest Images Executive Producer: Keith Shartle Producer: Dennis Hoffman Supervisor: Mat Beck Production Co-ordinator: Daniel J. Lombardo

Optical Supervisor: Jeff Matakovich Optical Line-up: Georgie Huntington Animation Supervisor: Jeff Burks Rotoscope Artist: James Valentine Animation Co-ordinator: Anjelica Casillas Digital Compositing: Howard Burdick VistaVision Camera Operator: Chuck Schuman Bluescreen Technician: Rick Johnson Special Mechanical Design: Tom Hollister Louis Lindwall Editor Mick Audsley **Production Designer** Dennis Gassner **Art Director** Leslie McDonald **Set Design** Gina B. Cranhan Lawrence A. Hubbs Set Decorator Nancy Haigh

John Morris

John Larsen

Rodger Pardee

Foley Supervisor

Stunt Co-ordinator

Mark Pappas

Gary Jensen

Keith Tellez

Bill Bates

John Gillespie

Doug Coleman

Gene Hartline

Lance Gilbert

Jimmy H. Burk

Michael Carr

Jimmy Lewis

Troy Gilbert

Ben Jensen

Mickey Gilbert

Pamela Bebermeyer

Christine Anne Baur

Stunts

Hamilton Sterling

John Joseph Thomas

Set Dressers Tinker Linville Chris Spellman **Production Illustrator** Paul Power **Special Effects** Co-ordinator Art Brewer Special Effects Mike Meinardus Greg Curtis Sam Barkan Music George Fenton **Music Extracts** "Theme From Close Encounters of the Third Kind" by John Williams **Orchestrations** Jeff Atmajian **Music Editor** Michael Connell **Music Consultant** Jeffrey Pollack Songs "Heart of a Hero" by and performed by Luther Vandross, The Los Angeles Children's Choir; "The Man I Love", "Hoping That Someday You'd Care" by George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin **Costume Design** Richard Hornung Wardrobe Supervisor: Christopher Lawrence Nancy Takehara Kaye Nottbusch Make-up Christina Smith Monty Westmore **Title Design** Julian Rothenstein Titles/Opticals Cinema Research Corporation **Supervising Sound Editor** Jerry Ross **Sound Editors** Bob Newlan Hugo Weng David Kulczycki Alison Fisher Peter Joly **Supervising ADR Editor** Susan Dudeck **ADR Editors** Allen Hartz Lauren Palmer John Benson Foley Editor Steve Richardson **Sound Recordists** Ronald Judkins Music: John Richards Dolby stereo Sound Re-recordists Steve Maslow Gregg Landaker Bill Benton **Sound Effects Editors**

Ethan Jensen Donna Evans Diane Wilson Dave Powledge Simone Boissuerree Kim Koscki Ray Saniger Gary Jensen Chloe Jensen Ken Bates Tony Cecere Hank Calia Donna Garrett George Colucci Dennis Madalone Cherie Rae

Cast

Dustin Hoffman

Bernie Laplante **Geena Davis** Gale Gayley **Andy Garcia** John Bubber Joan Cusack Evelyn Kevin J. O'Connor Chucky **Maury Chaykin** Winston Stephen Tobolowsky Wallace **Christian Clemenson** Conklin Tom Arnold Chick Warren Berlinger Judge Goines **Cady Huffman** Flight Attendant Leslie Susie Cusack Donna O'Day **James Madio** Joey **Richard Riehle** Robinson **Daniel Leroy Baldwin** Fireman Denton Don Yesso

Elliott **Don Pugsley** Jury Foreman Lee Wilkof Prosecutor Steven Elkins Raymond Fitzpatrick Bailiffs **Leslie Jordan** Court Official **Bobby C. Collins** Mendoza **Richard Montoya** Vargas Ricardo Salinas Mendoza's Friend **Herbert Siguenza** Espinosa Don S. Davis **Probation Officer Darrell Larson** Flight Attendant Freddy Harry Northup Mr Fletcher Jordan Bond Richie Fletcher Eric Poppick Mr Smith **Julia Barry** Kelly Marnie Mosiman Susan William Duff Griffin Mr Brown Peggy Roeder

Bag Lady on TV

Make-up Artist

Inspector Dayton

Katrina Cerio

Kevin Jackson

Bag Man **Paul Hewitt** Parker **Marita Geraghty** Joan **Shirley Pierce** Channel 4 Anchorwoman Sam Derence **Rick Plastina** Reporters **Martin Schienle** Allen in Coma **Jeff Garlin** News Vendor John M. Watson Snr African American Wannabee John Mohrlein **Tony Fitzpatrick** Fighter Wannabees Vito D'Ambrosio Wannabee Jay Leggett Mud Face Wannabee **Dev Kennedy** Tall Wannabee **Darryl Davis Terry Muller James Alfred Whitaker Tough Prisoners Collins Williams Daniels** Rasta Prisoner I. M. Hobson Waiter/Captain William Newman Millionaire Clea Lewis Sylvia Jeff Kline John Merrill Street Kids Lynn Oddo Buxom Woman Milton L. Cobb Robert Pabst Vietnam Vets **Tom Milanovich** Guard at Jail **Cordis Heard** Nurse Roberts **Mandy Duncan Gerardo Murillo-Carr** Teens in Hospital Henry Brown Hospital Guard **Robert Munns** Doctor Tamar Teufenkjian Jose Reyes Michael Mullen D'Angelo Ferreri **Kody Cullum** Children in Hospital Heidi McNeal Teenage Girl at Hospital Michael O'Dwyer

Don Gazzaniga

Fire Captain

Lance Kinsey

Paramedic

Michael Talbott

John Ackerman

State Police Officer

Cop at Hospital **Ed Scheibner** Donna's Boyfriend **James Callahan** Police Chief D. David Morin Fireman on Ledge **Dan Healy** George Bush Look A-Like **Margery Jane Ross** Barbara Bush Look A-Like 118 minutes

10,614 feet

Small-time Chicago. crook Bernie Laplante is found guilty of receiving stolen goods. While his lawyer, Donna O'Day, pleads for a few days bail before sentence is passed, Bernie lifts her purse. Later he goes to the zoo with his ten-year-old son Joey, who lives with Bernie's estranged wife Evelyn.

Gale Gayley, Chicago Channel 4's star reporter, flies to New York to

accept a Silver Mike award. Her return flight hits turbulence and crashes into a river. Bernie, driving past to take Joey to the movies, reluctantly wades in to open the plane's jammed door. Even more unwillingly, he rescues three passengers trapped in the burning aircraft. One of them is Gale, whose purse he steals, though his main concern is his shoe lost in the mud.

Arriving late for a date with Joey, Bernie is thrown out by the furious Evelyn. His car breaks down; getting a lift from John Bubber, a down-andout living in an old truck, he tells him what happened and gives him the remaining shoe. Gale meanwhile launches a huge media campaign to find her unknown rescuer, dubbed 'The Angel of Flight 104'. A \$1m reward is offered, with the stray shoe the only clue. John Bubber turns up with the shoe, claiming to be the mystery man. A Vietnam vet down on his luck, he is acclaimed a national hero. Bernie, arrested trying to unload Gale's credit cards, is slung in jail, vainly protesting he is the true Angel, and Donna bails him out.

Gale tracks down Bernie via her returned cards, taking him for a fence who is blackmailing John. Summoned to the hotel where John, overcome by remorse, is about to jump from a ledge, she drags Bernie with her. Crawling out on the ledge, Bernie strikes a deal: he gets a share of the cash, but John remains the official hero. He slips and falls; John rescues him. Back inside, Gale realises the truth but keeps it quiet. At the zoo, Bernie tells Joey what really happened; a child falls into the lion's cage, and Bernie wearily goes to the rescue.

Early on in Accidental Hero, ace reporter Gale Gayley, accepting her award at a gala assembly of her colleagues, shreds an onion to illustrate a point she's making. It's a jarringly implausible scene, not helped by Geena Davis' playing. Here, as elsewhere in the film, she seems awkward and unhappy with her role, and rather than peeling the onion layer by layer in slow striptease she wrenches it clumsily apart, as if to get the whole distasteful business over as soon as possible.

A gradual peeling, though, would be more apt for her metaphor, the idea of a news story that could yield not merely successive layers of ripe sensation, but one "that reveals with each layer of investigation something finer and nobler, inspiring even." It's clearly a pointer to what's coming, and in the film's final scene Bernie Laplante offers his disenchanted gloss on the same concept. "All there is," he tells his young son, "is bullshit - one layer of bullshit on top of another. All you do is choose the layer of bullshit that suits you."

Bets, it seems, are being hedged here. Accidental Hero picks up all the ingredients of an old-style Capraesque fable - lovable, harmless low-lifes, tough reporters with hearts of mush, trusting wide-eyed kids, feelgood mot



A taste of onion: Dustin Hoffman

toes like "we're all heroes if you catch us at the right moment" - but keeps holding them out at arm's length, as if signalling to us sophisticates in the audience that the film-makers aren't really taking all this stuff seriously. So if we opt to see something "noble, inspiring even", then fine. If not, we have our choice of bullshit. Andy Garcia, valiantly making the most of a hopelessly underwritten role, plays Bubber as a sure-fire hero whose one moment of weakness redeems his perfection. But the film - and George Fenton's score in particular - constantly undercuts him. Visiting a children's ward, he talks to a boy in a coma ("I know you're in the darkness in there be strong for me") who subsequently makes a "miracle recovery". The cliche of the scene is underscored (or, rather, overscored) with glutinously swelling strings. And when Bubber saves the life of the only man who could expose him, at the risk of his own, we get the Battle Hymn of the Republic, no less.

Originally called Hero, and poorly received at the US box office, the film has been retitled for its British release to make sure no-one misses the irony. But it still smells like a doomed venture, and Garcia apart, few of those involved give much impression of commitment. Hoffman turns in a cut-price retread of his Ratso Rizzo act from Midnight Cowboy, all shuffle and mumble. Frears' direction feels sluggish, lacking the edgy, raw-nerve quality he brought to The Grifters and Dangerous Liaisons. And it's hard to see where the contribution of screenwriter David Webb Peoples ties in with his work on Unforgiven, barring maybe a weakness for heroes who fall in the mud and growl a lot.

Just how far Frears and Peoples, or their actors, believe in what they're doing hardly matters. After all, Capra if Joseph McBride's recent biography is to be believed - never really bought the New Deal populism of his 30s movies. But he directed them as if he did, with no ironic winking at the audience. Accidental Hero tries to have it both ways. mocking its own corniness, ostentatiously unpeeling the onion to show us how slickly the layers fit together. And as Peer Gynt found out, the more you unpeel your onion the closer you get to the nothing at the heart of it.

hilip Kemp

Blue Black Permanent

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Margaret Tait

Certificate Distributor **Production Companies** BFI/Channel 4 A Viz Permanent production **Executive Producers** Ben Gibson Rod Stoneman Kate Swan **Executive in Charge** of Production Angela Topping Producer Barbara Grigor Co-producer Kate Swan Associate Producer Christine Maclean **Production Co-ordinator** Avril Watt **Location Managers** Sara Barr Andrea Calderwood Casting Susie Bruffin **Assistant Directors** Gus Maclean Alison Goring Margaret Tait **Director of Photography** In colour

John Gray **Music Director** David McNiven Pibroch/Vocals Allan MacDonald Songs "Half As Much" by Curly Williams, performed by Hank Williams; "Hilltop Pibroch" by Hector MacAndrew, Margaret

Costume Design Lynn Aitken Make-up Irene Napier Titles Paperdart Sound Editor Neil Castell **Sound Recordists** Aad Wirtz Adrian Rhodes

The 1950s: at the sea with her family, nine-year-old Barbara learns how to swim. The scene is recalled by the adult Barbara, now a photographer in present-day Edinburgh, who is talking to her lover Philip about her childhood and in particular about her mother, Greta.

She remembers Greta - who wrote poetry while bringing up three children - roaming happily in a rainstorm, taking notes. After the storm, Greta's friend Wendy catches her lost in thought and together they visit

Andrew, a painter whose flat is as much studio as home. Greta tells Andrew she admires his dedication, but contrasts his single-minded devotion to his art with her need to share her writing with a home life, a combination he considers impossible. Meanwhile Wendy, who had been shocked to find Greta distracted, slips out to phone Greta's husband Jim who, arriving at Andrew's from the office, is bemused by Greta's behaviour.

Returning to the present, Barbara and Philip tentatively discuss having children, but Barbara breaks off into a further recollection. Greta makes a trip to the Orkneys to check on the health of her father. She prepares breakfast for him, and the two share a drink with friends who have dropped by to talk old times. Time shifts still further back with Barbara recalling how her grandmother died when she was swept from land by the sea. On a walk to the shore, Barbara tells Philip she would like to paint the sea; they meet a friend who jokingly asks if they are married yet, and Barbara replies that they are not the marrying sort. A dream sequence which ends with Barbara floating in mid-air is followed by a memory of herself, young, shopping for shoes, very sure of her tastes.

Back in the present and back in the flat, Barbara realises what she has been looking for: an identity as herself, rather than her mother's daughter. She recalls how her mother died, walking into the sea. Philip finally admits to jealousy, asking where he fits into these stories. Encouraged by Barbara's wish to involve him, he suggests seeking out Greta's published poetry in the library. Later, Barbara visits Andrew to photograph him for an exhibition of his work. She is drawn to the same objects that attracted her mother and Andrew is reminded of Greta. Philip and Barbara visit Andrew's exhibition and the three go for a drink. Back at home, Barbara recalls the discovery of Greta's body and the discovery by her father of an unfinished poem.

Blue Black Permanent works like a talking cure. Barbara is at a crossroads - one choice seems to be between greater or lesser commitment to lover Philip – and goes looking for clues in the past. In the present-day scenes very little 'happens': the lovers talk disjointedly, potter about the flat and go for walks. The flashbacks tell the film's most complete story, covering events leading up to the death of Barbara's mother. Yet the present is not used as a mere framing device, nor is the death exploited for its 'drama'. Rather, the beauty of Margaret Tait's construction is that it allows connections across the two periods to emerge as the film progresses, serving the real drama, which lies in Barbara's attempts to understand and to communicate.

and fairly direct: Barbara and Philip seem to be at odds about having children, although neither's position is obvious, and yet one takes as germane Andrew's comments about having to

choose between pleasing yourself and having a family life. Or they may be diffuse. Water, for instance, is everywhere: for Barbara's first swim: as refreshing storm rain; and, in repeated shots, as steely, cold threat. It is promise or delight or a killer, each sight recalling and foreshadowing others.

More generally, words, faces, scenes suggest others, both to the characters within the film and to the viewer, so that everything and everyone seem to exist entirely to stimulate recollections of something or someone else. The network that Tait sets up might even be seen to reflect on the nature of creativity itself, establishing a lattice-work of points that is accessed by memory and imagination. Tait has made some 30 short films since the early 1950s and the structure of this, her first feature in which thematic coherence counts for more than straight narrative - is of a sort more often found in shorts. In tone, it is very much of a piece: the colours are sombre and the music (scored for two cellos and clarinet by John Gray who, like Tait, is a native of the Orkney Islands) meditative.

Tait's direction is invariably apt. In the conversations between Barbara and Philip, the camera acts detached as if chancing upon fragments of conversation. In the flashbacks, objects are fixed or lingered over as if viewed by one of the film's 'artists' - Andrew. Greta and Barbara. When Greta prepares breakfast for her father and, in turn, the old stove, the bread and the eggs are pored over. Tait could be inviting us to feel their texture with much the same minute interrogation of detail as Terence Davies applied to the carpet in The Long Day Closes.

Almost between the lines, the small story of the present unfolds. The memories and their telling serve a purpose as Barbara realises she is not compelled to follow past family patterns; while Philip gains from sharing in her story and, by extension, in her. One could imagine a similar premise treated as a verbal roundelay, as a stagey TV drama where issues are talked into the ground. Tait's achievement is to suggest the processes that lie behind our ways of seeing, our declarations, and to find a style that enacts, or at least simulates, those very processes,

Robert Yates



Blue rinse: Gerda Stevenson

Cast

Celia Imrie

Jack Shepherd

Philip Lomax

Gerda Stevenson

lim Thorburn

Andrew Cunningham

Sean Scanlan

Hilary Maclean

Wendy

Walter Leask

Sam Kelday

Sheana Marr

Mrs Kemp

Dan of Fea

Jimmy Moar

Billy Spence

Liz Robertson

Mary Kelday

Keith Hutcheon

Mairi Wallace

Pamela Kelly

Mrs Brodie

Joan Alcorn

Mrs Kilgour

Joan Kilgour

Gowan Calder

Katie Groat

Young Barbara

James Holmes

Sean Holmes

Elsa Davidson

Young Greta

Thomas Pirie

Newsreader

Art Critic

Erlend Tait

Peter Tait

Boatmen

7,696 feet

86 minutes

Douglas Sutherland

Donald

Bill Jack

Eileen

Fergus

Lisa Grindall

Shoe Salesgirl

Grandfather Bews

Bobby Bews

Roger

Eoin MacDonald

James Fleet

Greta Thorburn

Barbara Thorburn

Screenplay Alex Scott

Editor John MacDonnell **Production Designer** Andrew Semple

Tait: "Fishermen's Hymn", traditional

Music: Brian Young Dolby stereo

Music Consultant

Bob Last

Crush

New Zealand 1992

Director: Alison Maclean Certificate Distributor Metro Pictures **Production Company** Hibiscus Films In association with New Zealand Film Commission/NFU Studios/NZ On Air Developed by The Movie Partners Ltd With assistance from The Sundance Institute Producer Bridget Ikin Associate Producer Trevor Haysom Production Executive Sue Thompson **Production Co-ordinator** Moira Grant **Production Manager** Chloe Smith **Location Manager** Sally Sherratt Post-production Co-ordinator Cushla Dillon Casting Diana Rowan **Assistant Directors** George Lyle Victoria Hardy Velma Wright Screenplay Alison Maclean Anne Kennedy **Director of Photography** Dion Beebe In colour 2nd Unit Director of Photography Allen Guilford Camera Operator Ian Turtill Opticals Lynda Sinclair John Gilbert

Meryl Cronin **Art Directors Brett Schwieters** David Turner JPS Experience Additional: Antony Partos Music Performed by Russell Baillie James Laing Dave Mulcahy Gary Sullivan David Yetton Trumpet: Greg Johnson The Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra Pianist: Guy Noble Orchestrations Derek Williams Music Editor Andrew Lancaster Music Consultant John Hopkins

"Dangerous Game"

by Rafer Rautjolo,

performed by Jules

Issa: "Hold Me Tight"

by and performed by

Pete Smith; "Do It Like

This" by Dean Hapeta.

performed by Upper

Hutt Posse; "I Need

George Hubbard,

Production Designer

Your Love" by Calvin Kaukau, performed by Golden Harvest; "Night" by Tom Ludwigson, performed by Inner City Jazz Workshop Costume Design Ngila Dickson Make-up Abby Collins Dominic Till **Prosthetics** Bob McCarron Title Design Graham Cooper **Supervising Sound Editor** Greg Bell Sound Editors Kit Rollings Mike Hopkins Ross Chambers Sound Recordists Robert Allen Foley: Helen Luttrell Michael Hedges Music: Victor Grbic

Stephen Murphy Sound Re-recordists John McKay Music: John Neill Consultants Physiotherapist: Denise Lyness Nurse: Shirley Wilson Stunt Co-ordinator Peter Bell Stunts Bruce Brown Cast

Marcia Gay Harden

Angus McNaughton

Anthony Nerison

Michael Stavrov

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Lane William Zappa Colin Donogh Rees Christina **Caitlin Bossley** Angela **Pete Smith** Horse Jon Brazier Arthur **Geoffrey Southern** Wayne Roberts Patients Shirley Wilson Denise Lyness Trish Howie Wayne McCoram Jennifer Karehana Nurses **David Stott** Stephen Harata Solomon Aunty Bet Caroline De Lore Colleen Phil McLachlan Ward Sister **Alistair McConnell** Doctor Terry Batchelor Taxi Driver

8,627 feet 96 minutes

Waiter

Martin Booker

Zealand. Journalist New Christina and her anarchic American friend Lane drive to Rotorua to interview prize-winning novelist Colin. Lane takes the wheel and crashes the car. She escapes uninjured,



Steaming in Hell's Kitchen: Marcia Gay Harden, Caitlin Bossley

severe brain damage. The stunned Lane retreats to a nearby motel. She decides to keep Christina's appointment with Colin. Outside his house, she meets his fifteen-year-old daughter Angela and makes no secret of her attraction to her. Taking Angela back to the motel, she lends her a provocative dress to wear to the local night-club that evening. Despite her father's disapproval. Angela wears the dress and accompanies Lane.

At the club, Angela is attracted to Maori singer Horse, but it is Lane who seduces him, inviting him and Angela back to the motel. After an intruder attempts unsuccessfully to get into the room, Lane and Angela return to Angela's house to sleep. Next morning, Lane introduces herself to Colin and invites him to the motel on the pretext of giving him a haircut. Colin accepts the invitation and they make love. Later, Lane moves in with Colin and Angela. After Lane openly spends the night with Colin, Angela goes to the hospital to visit Christina. Benefiting from Angela's regular visits, Christina gradually comes out of her coma. Jealous of Lane's affair with her father, Angela primes Christina with hatred of Lane as the person responsible for Christina's injuries.

When Colin, Lane and Angela go to stay at a lakeside cottage. Angela arranges for Christina to join them. Both Colin and Lane are shocked by the appearance of the wheelchairbound Christina. During a walk in the hills, Angela and Colin leave Lane and Christina alone together. To Lane's surprise, Christina is suddenly able to walk. They arrive at a hill-top look-out, where Christina suddenly pushes Lane over the parapet. Angela, fearing the worst, hurries back to find them, but arrives just too late witness Christina's act of revenge.

Crush begins well. Director Alison Maclean, whose first feature this is, expertly draws the viewer into the action via the intimate conversations between the two friends Christina and Lane during their drive along the New Zealand backroads in the opening scene. The careful placing of characters within an ambience and lack of melodramatic rhetoric recall Peter Weir's relaxed introduction to The Cars

but Christina is hospitalised with | That Ate Paris. The script and Marcia Gay Harden's blithely anarchic performance establish Lane's iconoclasm and the ruthlessness with which this American friend flouts conventional morality. It is also hinted, through Angela's sexual ambiguity, that all may not be as it seems.

> Maclean has expressed her admiration for the way Bunuel uses sexuality to cut through bourgeois pretension. In Pasolini's Teorema a mysterious stranger similarly releases a family's repressed sexuality to disturbing effect. But Maclean, however vivid her portrait of the amoral intruder, never really gives enough substance to the small-town values Lane throws into disarray. Colin's status as a reputed novelist is left somewhat obscure, while only the odd glimpse of suburban life is offered: late-night antics at the club, a few extras at a restaurant, the stunted architecture, and the clipped language of the protagonists. The signs of an incipient tourist industry are given distinctly malevolent implications, from the mannequin dressed in Maori costume to the threatening hiss of the bubbling natural geysers of Hell's Kitchen which suggest a veneer of civilisation in imminent danger of cracking apart. Natural forces have been used as potent symbols in films like Henry Hathaway's Niagara or Rossellini's Stromboli, where they are matched by characters who possess equal dynamism. Here, it is only Lane's evil intent that manages to convince. Angela's desire for vengeance is both too masked by Caitlin Bossley's placid performance and too heavily signposted by the script to be effective.

> It might have been better to speed the narrative to its inevitable conclusion as soon as Angela's true purpose in visiting Christina becomes clear. Colin is portrayed as a sexual stooge from the beginning (at one point he clownishly approaches Lane with one leg in and one out of his trousers) - which may sharpen the film's sexual sting, but is hardly enough motivation for the character to hunch angst-ridden in front of his word processor. Nevertheless, Crush contains an impressive performance from Harden and provides sufficient evidence of an authentically skewed eye-view to arouse interest in Maclean's future work.

Verina Glaessner

The Distinguished Gentleman

USA 1992

Director: Jonathan Lynn

Certificate Costume Design Francine Jamison-Distributor Tanchuck Buena Vista **Costume Supervisor** Betty Jean Slater **Production Company** Hollywood Pictures Costumers Fetteroff Colen III Company **Executive Producer** David Page Michael Fitzpatrick Marty Kaplan Producers Aida Swinson Michael Castellano Leonard Goldberg Michael Peyser Michael Lee Jamison **Production Associates** Make-up Stephen Mapel Richard Mirisch **Production Co-ordinators** Lark Bernini Alison Sherman **Unit Production Manager** Richard H. Prince **Location Managers** Murray Miller Veronique Vowell **Location Co-ordinator** D. Michael Wallace Casting Mary Goldberg **Assistant Directors** Frank Capra III Matthew H. Rowland Algric Leo Chaplin Screenplay Marty Kaplan Story Marty Kaplan Jonathan Reynolds Director of Photography Gabriel Beristain Colour Technicolor Camera Operators Richard Turner Jeff Laszlo Steadicam Operator Jeff Mart Matte Artist: Paul Lasaine Painting: Buena Vista Visual Effects Editors Tony Lombardo Barry B. Leirer **Production Designer** Leslie Dilley **Art Director** Ed Verreaux Set Design Geoff Hubbard Lawrence Hubbs Elizabeth Lapp Set Decorator Dorree Cooper Set Dressers John H. Maxwell Deborah Harman

Tim Wiles

Illustrator

Marc Baird

Co-ordinator

an H. Aaris

Music/Music Director

Randy Edelman

Greig McRitchie

"The Thunderer"

lack Yellen; "Soul

Allen, performed

by Phil Marshall

by Chuckii Booker;

"The Politics of Love"

by John Philip Sousa;

"Happy Days Are Here

Again" by Milton Ager.

Trilogy III" by Chuckii

Booker, Derek "DOA"

Orchestrations

Music Editor

Songs

Tom Carlson

Special Effects

Scott E. Bruza

Richard R. Powell

Alan Oliney Cast **Eddie Murphy** Johnson Lane Smith Dick Dodge Sheryl Lee Ralph Miss Loretta Joe Don Baker Olaf Andersen Victoria Rowell Celia Kirby **Grant Shaud** Kevin McCarthy Victor Rivers Armando Chi

Homer

Van Dyke

Sonny Jim Gaines

Rick Sharp Steve Artmont Anthony S. Lloyd Title Design Dan Perri Titles/Opticals Buena Vista Optical Supervising Sound Editor Fred Jedkins Sound Editors Gaston Biraben David Lee Hagberg Philip Hess William Hooper Christopher Todd Scott Weber Ed Bannon Richard Corwin Rich Steven Supervising ADR Editor Renée Tondelli **Foley Supervisor** Bruce Nyznik **ADR Editors** James A. Borgardt Jerelyn J. Harding Jonathan A. Klein Sound Recordists Russell Williams II Music: Dennis Sands **ADR Recordist** Doc Kane Foley Recordist David Gertz Dolby stereo Sound Re-recordists John Rietz Dave Campbell Gregg Rudloff ADR Group Co-ordinator Leigh French **ADR Voices** Royce Applegate Thomas Brunelle June Christopher Kit Paraventi Ruth Silveira Arnold Turner **Foley Artists** James M. Moriana Jeffrey Wilhoit Stunt Co-ordinator Thomas Jefferson Arthur Reinhardt Terry Corrigan Charles S. Dutton Elijah Hawkins

Noble Willingham Zeke Bridges **Gary Frank** Iowa Daniel Benzali "Skeeter" Warburton Cynthia Harris Vera Johnson Susan Forristal Ellen Juba **Autumn Winters** Mickey Juba James Garner Jeff Johnson **Doris Grau** Hattie Rifkin Frances Foster Grandma Sarah Carson Kimberly Mel Owens Bo Chandler **Brad Koepenick** Rafe Simon John Doolittle Ira Schecter Rosanna Huffman Mrs Bridges **Dianne Turley Travis** Mrs Dodge Tom Dahlgren Chief of Police Tom Finnegan Ethics Committee Chair Marty Kaplan Ned Grable **Cliff Bemis**

Gun Lobbyist

Nina Totenberg Election Anchor Julianna McCarthy Blue-haired Woman **Daniel Petrie Inr** Asbestos Lobbyist Dion Anderson Distilled Spirits Lobbyist Stu Levin Tobacco Lobbyist Richard Anders Poultry Lobbyist **Brian Gelatto** Crabhouse Waiter Roger Reid Florida Reporter Angela Stribling DC Anchor Patricia Ciaffa DC Correspondent David A. Penhale Voting Husband Cordis Heard Voting Wife **Gary Price** Taxi Driver Tommy Boggs Tommy Boggs J.D. Williams

Prudence Barry

Teacher

10,103 feet 112 minutes

J.D. Williams

At a fund-raiser for corrupt Florida congressman Jeff Johnson, small-time hustler Thomas Jefferson Johnson cons the host out of twelve thousand dollars and a Rolex watch. As he makes his escape he hears the congressman and his corporate paymaster discussing bounteous kickbacks, and concludes that he's in the wrong business.

When the congressman dies. Thomas decides to stand in his place, with a campaign - "Jeff Johnson - the name you know" - whose sole asset is name recognition. By carefully keeping his face and personality out of the debate, Johnson engineers a narrow victory. Arriving in Washington with his old partners in confidence crime as his staff, he soon gets himself a place on the influential Power and Energy Commission. He's just starting to reap the benefits of his new position when he meets Celia Kirby, an attractive and principled pro bono campaigner, whose uncle is campaigning congressman Elijah Hawkins, then engaged in a bitter struggle over ethics with Johnson's crooked patron Dick Dodge.

Against his worse nature, Johnson gets involved with a mother and child who are campaigning for an investigation into cancer clusters at schools electricity sub-stations. Dodge and his cronies buy him off, and he also inadvertently helps them to discredit Celia's uncle, much to her disgust. To win back her favour and reassert his pride, Johnson decides to con Dodge. At a commission meeting, with the mass media much in evidence, he tries to railroad him into announcing an inquiry into the carcinogenic effects of power lines by threatening to make public a videotape which he implies contains evidence of corruption. Confronted by Johnson, Dodge realises he is bluffing. and then tells the assembled throng bout Johnson's criminal background.

But the latter has taped their private argument, which he plays back in open session, discrediting Dodge and laying bare the corruption that surrounds him, He tells Celia that now everyone knows his face he is finished as a conman, so he'll have to stand for President.

Eddie Murphy's rehabilitation as a family entertainer continues apace with this good-humoured Capitol Hill romp. Murphy has not been reborn as a political radical; the emphasis here is on sprightly, character-driven comedy with windows for trademark smirk and chuckle. The storyline of the conman who goes up in the world and becomes a better person is strongly reminsicent of Trading Places, and though this film is not as perfectly realised as that one, which was probably Murphy's finest moment, it does contain his funniest, most relaxed performance for some years.

This is not a subtle film. The congressman (a quick but welcome exercise cameo from James Garner) cannot just die, he has to die in flagrante with his personal assistant. You can hear the star vehicle wheels creaking every now and again too; as agents of moral awakening go, the child cancer-victim whose wig falls off in a struggle is not exactly working undercover. But the film's critique of political corruption and hypocrisy is quite sharp in places. and The Distinguished Gentleman is a lot less self-congratulatory and also rather better thought out than the disappointing Bob Roberts. It is also considerably more democratic - preferring to make comic capital out of the abuses of those in power, rather than the cupidity of those who vote for them.

The political process is hardly new ground for British director Jonathan Lynn, who comes to The Distinguished Gentleman fresh from considerable surprise success with My Cousin Vinny. Lynn made his name writing and directing Yes Minister for the BBC, but he clearly relishes the broader strokes of satire required by the American cinema audience. Like My Cousin Vinny, this film is slightly too long and somewhat uneven in pace - the effect of some very funny moments being undermined by too many jokeless interludes - but whenever Murphy is on screen it's never far from being funny. And Lynn has helped make his star likeable again, which a year ago seemed almost impossible.

It's interesting too to watch the tension between Murphy's star presence and the idea of political influence. His character is not a fish out of water but a bottom-feeder nibbling around for what he can get until he bites off a moral imperative. It comes as no surprise that it's an environmental rather than a racial issue that leads him to reveal his true colours. There is a subtext here of considerable political subtlety on the part of Murphy himself who seems to be admitting he got above himself for a while back there. and now just wants to make amends. Ben Thompson

Forever Young

USA 1992

Director: Steve Miner

Certificate Distributor Warner Bros **Production Company** Warner Bros **Executive Producers** Edward S. Feldman Jeffrey Abrams Producer Bruce Davey Unit Production Manager Stephen M. McEveety **Location Managers** Ron Carr Gail Stempler 2nd Unit Director David Ellis Casting Marion Dougherty **Assistant Directors** Matt Earl Beesley David Schrager John Kuberski Tom Peitzman Andy Spilkoman Chris Gerrity John Scotti Screenplay

Jeffrey Abrams Director of Photography Russell Boyd Colour Technicolor Additional Photography/ 2nd Unit Photography Michael Benson **Aerial Photography** Rexford Metz Camera Operators Michael St. Hilaire Chris Schweibert Phil Schwartz Optical/Digital Effects Peter Kuran Editor Jon Poll **Production Designer** Gregg Fonseca

Art Director

Set Design

Bruce A. Miller

Jann K. Engel Richard Yanez Steve Jeffrey Wolff Set Decorator Jay R. Hart **Mechanical Effects** Image Special Effects Company Peter Chesney Music/Music Director Jerry Goldsmith Orchestrations Arthur Morton Alexander Courage Music Editor Ken Hall Songs

of You" by Ray Noble,
performed by Billie
Holiday; "You Are My
Sunshine" by Jimmie
Davis, Charles Mitchell
Costume Design
Aggie Guerard Rodgers
Costume Supervisors
Frank Rose
Deanna Doran
Make-up

The Very Thought

Dick Smith
Michael Hancock
Lona Jeffers
Special Make-up Effects
Greg Cannom
Title Design
Nina Saxon

Film Design
Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title
Supervising Sound Editor
Dane A. Davis

Sound Editors

Martin J. Bram

Kimberly Lowe Voigt

ADR Supervisor

G.W. Brown

ADR Editor Avram Gold **Foley Editors** Tom Hammond Kurt N. Forshager **Sound Recordists** Jim Tanenbaum Music: Bruce Botnick Dolby stereo Sound Re-recordists Les Fresholtz Vern Poore Dick Alexander Sound Effects Editors Todd Toon Kini Kay Peter Tomaszewicz **Technical Advisers** Major Christopher G. Chalko Charles E. Davis Major Violeta A. Strong Medical: Donna Cline Matt Clancy Stunt Co-ordinator David Ellis **Aerial Co-ordinator** James W. Cavin Stunts Gregory Barnett Steve Boyum Steve Chambers John Thomas Cypert Annie Ellis Richard Ellis Tony Epper Don Pulford Mic Rogers

Ric Waugh

Dick Ziker

Steve Hinton

B25 Pilot

Cast

Mel Gibson Daniel McCormick Jamie Lee Curtis Claire Elijah Wood Isabel Glasser Helen **George Wendt** Harry Joe Morton Cameron **Nicelas Surovy** John **David Marshall Grant** Wilcox Robert Hy Gorman Felix Millie Stavin Susan Finley Michael Goorjian Steven Veronica Lauren Alice ArtLaFleur Alice's Father **Eric Pierpoint** Fred **Walt Goggins** Gate MP **Amanda Foreman** Debbie Karla Tamburrelli Blanche **Robert Munns** Wrong Harry J.D. Cullum Frank Ava Lazar Waitress at Diner (1992)Richard Ryder Michael Briggs Pilots at Airshow Kenny Ransom **Jared Chandler** Officers at Warehouse Jon Menick Doctor at Airfield

Jason lorg
Airbase Personnel
(1939)
Mary Ellen Moore
Ticket Woman
Miriam Beesley
Lisa Savage
Women at Picnic
Cody Burger
Boy at Picnic
Dean Hallo
Greg Allan Martin
Joel McKinnon Miller

Men at Picnic

William Marquez
Hospital Doctor
Steve Hinton Jur
Boy with Ice Cream
John Bourg
Daniel, age 11
Ara Maxwell
Helen, age 11

9,127 feet 101 minutes

1939. Daniel McCormick is a courageous young test pilot for the newly-formed Air Corps. His best friend Harry Finley is experimenting secretly in cryogenics. The two friends celebrate when Harry's first experiments are successful. Later, Daniel and his girlfriend Helen join Harry and his wife Blanche at their barbecue where Harry announces that Blanche is pregnant. The next day, Daniel practices asking Helen to marry him but finally lacks the courage to propose. Helen is involved in a road accident which leaves her in what is apparently an irreversible coma. Six months later, a stillgrieving Daniel is told by Harry that he is ready to experiment on a human being, but doesn't have a subject. Daniel volunteers to be deep-frozen for a year.

1992. Ten year-old Nat lives with his mother Claire, a nurse. Nat and his best friend Felix explore an old army warehouse where they discover Harry's freezing machine, and inadvertently return the frozen Daniel to life. The terrified boys run away, leaving Nat's jacket behind, but no-one believes their story. Daniel discovers that he has been asleep for 50 years, and tells his story to a young army officer who summons guards. Daniel escapes, finds Nat and returns the jacket. Nat and Felix hide him in Nat's tree house.

That evening, Daniel rescues Claire from attack by a drunken ex-boyfriend. Claire takes him in, but he leaves to search for Harry. When his leads come to nothing, Daniel returns to Claire's house as a guest and makes himself useful as cook, handyman and friend to Nat. Meanwhile, the army stumbles on the truth of Daniel's story and a team of medical and FBI personnel is assembled to find him. Daniel is suffering from the after-effects of freezing and eventually ends up in hospital with heart failure where Claire's doctor boyfriend, John, recognises him.



Medium cool: Mel Gibson

The medical tests show that Daniel is ageing rapidly. The FBI is now on his trail; John helps Daniel escape with Claire and Nat from the hospital, and Claire takes him to see a woman who has responded to Daniel's search for Harry. She turns out to be Harry's daughter Susan, and tells Daniel that Helen is still alive. Claire helps Daniel to steal an aeroplane and he takes off, unaware that Nat is in the hold. During the flight Daniel is gripped with pain and Nat has to help him land the aircraft. At Helen's house on the coast, Daniel and Helen are reunited and embrace amid declarations of love and promises of marriage.

Steve Miner may not be the best director in Hollywood but he is certainly not the worst, as one reviewer dubbed him at the preview of Forever Young: House lacked a punchline and Soul Man was a curate's egg, but Warlock had real possibility. Forever Young, though, is a risible failure. Never sure what kind of film it is meant to be, it starts off as comic-strip action, careers into buddy-buddy and turns into tearjerker before the plot gets going. By the time the action jumps to 1992, it's become a kids' movie, and en route to the finish it's alternately an action adventure, slapstick comedy and romantic drama. The discovery of an alien, even a frozen one, is a common enough theme, but did Miner really have to include the series of *E.T.*-lookalike shots as the FBI/medical team get on Daniel's trail, the camera resolutely focused at knee-level?

With all flashback (or in this case, flash-forward) movies, there is always a problem with the continuity of casting, and Forever Young is no exception. George Wendt (from Cheers and House), playing Harry, sadly disappears when his death has to propel the plot into the 90s. Isabel Glasser as Helen, the romantic lead, has little more than a walk-on part, and only reappears for just a minute or two at the end, hideously aged to look like a cross between She-Who-Waits and a Romero zombie, for what must be one of the most repellent on-screen embraces ever filmed. But it's a major betrayal of talent when two stars like Mel Gibson and Jamie Lee Curtis get caught up in this sort of nonsense. Both Gibson and Curtis have a genuine talent for comedy but the script barely exploits the comic possibilities of Daniel's awakening 50 years on (let no-one dare even mention Sleeper). Gibson and Curtis, especially the latter, are both ultrasexy; but Curtis is horribly miscast as the no-style mumsy divorcee and Gibson fares no better as the ageing process gets underway, leaving the audience hoping for back views of an improbably cute 80-year-old arse.

In the end a dollop of gooey sentiment is OK as long as it's well scripted and directed. Forever Young doesn't even manage that, proving that it takes more than a little skill to manipulate an audience to tears.

Jill McGreal

Guling Jie Shaonian Sha Ren Shijian (A Brighter Summer Day)

Taiwan 1991

Director: Edward Vano

Director: Edward Yang Certificate Not yet issued Distributor **Production Company** Yang and His Gang Filmmakers **Executive Producer** Zhang Hongzhi Producer Yu Weiyan **Production Manager** Wu Zhuang **Assistant Directors** Cai Guohui Yang Shunqing Screenplay Edward Yang Yan Hongya Yang Shunqing Lai Mingtang **Directors of Photography** Zhang Huigong Li Longyu Chen Bowen **Production Designer** Yu Weiyan Edward Yang **Set Decorator** Yang Shunqing **Music Supervisor**

Zhan Hongda Songs "Why" by Bob Marcucci, Peter Deangle, "Angel Baby" by Rosie and the Originals, Rose Havlim, "Never Be Anyone Else But You" by B. Knight, "Poor Little Fool" by Sharon Sheeley, "Don't Be Cruel" by Otis Blackwell, Elvis Presley, performed by Ku-Ling-Jie, Shao-Nyan Band; "Are You Lonesome Tonight" by Roy Turk, Lou Handman performed by (1) Ku-Ling-Jie, Shao-Nyan Band, (2) Elvis Presley; "Mr Blue" by Dewayne Blackwell, Otis Blackwell, performed by Fleetwoods Wardrobe Chen Rofei Wu Leqing Zhu Meiyu Make-up Wu Shuhui **Sound Recordist**

Du Duzhi

Zhang Zhen

Cast

Xiao Si'r (Zhang Zhen) Lisa Yang Ming (Liu Zhiming) **Zhang Guozhu** Zhang Ju (Father) Elaine Jin Mrs Zhang (Mother) Wang Juan Juan (Eldest Sister) **Zhang Han** Lao Er (Elder Brother) Jiang Xiuqiong Qiong (Middle Sister) Lai Fanyun Yun (Youngest Sister) **Wang Qizan** Cat (Wang Mao) Ke Yulun Airplane (Ji Fei)

Cao Jinling Mrs Chen Xiao Zhiwen Ma's Mother **Tan Zhigang** Chen Liangyue Chauffeur **Zhang Mingxin** Chen Lihua Underpants (Mingxin) Reverend Chen **Rong Juniong Zhang Kezhong** Sex Bomb Juan's Boyfriend (Zhang Bowen) Lu Deming Zhou Huiguo Airplane's Father Tiger (Xiao Hu) Xiao Ai Liu Qingqi Ice-cream Parlour Lady Hefty (Da Ge) Chen Xishen **He Qingxiang** Blind, Fighter pilot Animal (Mao Shou) **Huang Shujuan** Cai Changda Girl Vendor Li Zhongming Shen Hongshen Tiger's Buddies Dean of Conduct Tang Xiaocui **Meng Qiliang** Jade (Xiao Cui) Assistant Dean Jiang Mingying of Conduct Jade's Girlfriend Yan Hongya **Lin Hongming** Chinese Studies Honey Teacher Wang Zongzheng Ma Tingni Deuce Mathematics Teacher Chen Hongyu **Hu Xiangping** Sly (Huatou) Military Advisor **Yang Tianxiang** Sun Baogui Worm (Qiuying) Jiang Weihua Liao Xiaowei Librarians Lin Zhengqing **Shi Mingyang** Li Mingxun Doctor **Chen Taisong** Li Minghzi Lin Yuchen **Zhong Yicheng**

He Jiaxian

Zheng Kangnian

Xu Xianliang

Tang Zhijian

Zheng Zihong

Cao Yiwen

Guitarist

Liu Mingzheng

Bass-player

Zhang Yiqun

Drummer

Keyboards

Shandong

Ni Shujun

Ka Wu

Wu Ba

Qu Dehai

Shi Peiming

Liu Liangzou

Mouth

Shen Hang

Fu Yangye

Li Qingfu

Chen Yiwen

Lin Renjie

Cai Yiqing

Piggy

Diaper

Xu Ming

Wang

Cai Qin

Headlights

(Liangguang)

Feng Guoqiang

Ying Yulong

Wang's Wife

Threads (Yezi)

Cushion (Kexing)

Headmaster (Shiye)

Horsecart (Mache)

Zheng Yuancheng

Morphine (Mafei)

Grapefruit (Wendan)

Yang Shunqing

Wang Weiming

Zheng Jianxiong

Wang Yeming

Baldie (Guangtou)

Kid Brother (Xiao Di)

Cowboy (Xibu)

Crazy (Shenjing)

Yuan Ling

Gang Members

Zhuo Ming

Zhang Wenyan

Xiao Lianlian

Uncle Fat (Grocer)

Uncle Fat's Wife

Zhang Yingzheng

Ming's Mother

Ming's 7th Uncle

7th Uncle's Wife

Jin Shijie

Lin Liqing

Tang Ruyun

Mrs Xia

Lu Qiuyun

Mrs Fang

Mr Chen

Duan Zhongqi

Uncle Fat's Daughter

Lin Ruping Hospital Nurse **Danny Dunn** The Film Director Shi Mingyu The Temperamental Star Lin Hengzheng The Male Lead Shi Yihua The Assistant Director Shu Guozhi The Cameraman **Guo Changru** The Key Grip Gao Miaohui The Producer Liu Changhao Juvenile Division Officer Xie Hongjun **Duan Zhongzhang Juvenile Division Cops** Hou Dejian The Detective Lang Zuyun Policewoman Tang Xiangju Chen Laifu Policemen Li Minnan Workman Yu Weiyan **Wang Daonan** Interrogators Wu Zhuang **Wu Leging** Officers Li Ziqiang Prisoner **Yang Liping Zhou Huiling** Lovers in Park

Chen Limei

Clinic Nurse

Chen Xiangqi

Lai Denan

Doctor's Fiancée

Doctor's Father

Taipei, 1960. 14-year-old Xiao Si'r attends the Junior High night school, though his father Zhang Ju – a hard-working civil servant – hopes that next summer the boy will be able to transfer to the more prestigious day school. Xiao Si'r is a conscientious pupil, but like his friends Cat and Airplane he exists on the fringes of the local Little Park gang. Internal divisions are rife since the exile of the gang's charismatic leader Honey, and Xiao Si'r inadvertently precipitates an acrimonious power struggle when he reports spotting gang member Sly with Jade, another boy's girl.

21,330 feet

237 minutes

Subtitles

Despite his father's protests, Xiao Si'r is punished with a major demerit when it is discovered that Sly copied his answers in an exam. Sly is expelled, though his authority within the Little Park gang is undiminished. Xiao Si'r begins to see a girl himself, although he is wary of getting too intimate with Ming: Honey fled Taipei after killing a rival over her. Ming also captivates a director at the film studio adjacent to the school. She takes a screen test, but promptly forgets about it when she and her asthmatic mother have to move back across town to the district patrolled by the 217 gang. Shandong, leader of the 217s, entices Sly to bring the Little Park gang into his control, with Sly at their head. The new regime is marked by the 217s' presence at a rock and roll concert on Little Park turf (Cat and Honey's brother Deuce are the support band's vocalists). Honey makes

a vain, impetuous attempt to reassert his control, only to be killed by the cowardly Shandong.

Xiao Si'r pledges himself to the distraught Ming, but she will not be consoled. He is befriended by a new classmate, Ma, a general's son, who advises him not to get hung up on girls. Deuce and some of Honey's old allies - including Xiao Si'r – avenge his death with a bloody raid on 217 headquarters. Shandong is killed, though Sly makes his escape. The same night, the police pick up Xio Si'r's father and interrogate him about his old Communist colleagues. Zhang Ju emerges from the ordeal a broken man, demoted at work and no longer able to trust his own instincts. Xiao Si'r and Ming begin to see more of each other, although his happiness is tempered by rumours about her past liaisons, and he loses his temper when taken aside by the school doctor, who has been accused of flirting with Ming himself. Stung by the headmaster's disrespect towards his father, Xiao Si'r becomes violent. Expelled, he sees Ming, Ma and Cat only from time to time; instead he concentrates on passing the Day School entrance exams. Alongside his studious resolve, Xiao Si'r harbours a grudge against Sly, whom he blames for his first demerit and the death of Honey. Sly proves disarmingly amicable at their meeting, though Xiao Si'r is enraged to hear that Ma has moved in on Ming. An encounter with Jade brings further disillusionment: it was Ming, not Jade, who had been with Sly that night at the start of all the trouble. Xiao Si'r hopes to redeem Ming's honour by challenging Ma to a duel. Ma is held by the school authorities when he brings a sword to class; instead Ming confronts Xiao Si'r, who stabs her with a knife in anger and frustration.

In its full 237-minute version, Edward Yang's A Brighter Summer Day reproduces the thematic density and cinematic acumen of his films The Terroriser and Taipei Story on a panoramic scale reminiscent of Hou Hsiao-Hsien's A City of Sadness. Set 11 years after the end of Hou's intimate historical epic, A Brighter Summer Day opens on an image - a naked lightbulb - that immediately recalls the flickering light that closed the earlier film. It is a motif that recurs throughout the picture: the very first time we see him, Xiao Si'r steals a torch from a night watchman, and when he becomes curious about the blur that results from switching on and off between light and dark, his mother sends him to the school doctor for eyeshots (it is at the clinic that he first sees Ming). In what is significantly a nocturnal film, the promise of enlightenment held out in the title (from Elvis Presley's 'Are You Lonesome Tonight?') goes largely unrealised.

Inspired by an incident from Yang's childhood, an adolescent *crime passionel* involving a pupil just a year his senior (Yang was born in 1947), the film roots its melodrama in the consciousness of the time. Characters emerge from the background. Yang's *mise en scène*, again



and deep focus; a cinema of establishing shots, patient and reserved. It is an aesthetic that connects individuals with groups (class, gang or family) and fixes characters within their environment: the rigidly defined gang zones;

the school; the roomy mansion where

Ma lives and the close confines of Xiao

Si'r's home (an unfortunate by-product of this style, at least for a Western viewer, is that the relative scarcity of close-ups can make it difficult to identify individuals - and this is a film with

more than 80 speaking parts).

Taipei is shaped by the night: claustrophobic, regimented and oppressive. This is literally a dark period in history. The populace still bears the scars of the 1949 mass immigration; this is a people caught between cultures and ideologies (Chinese/Japanese/Taiwanese/ Occidental) for whom the past is officially off-limits and the present full of doubt and disillusionment. As an early explanatory title notes, the children carried the burden of their parents' disappointment; many "defined their sense of identity and security by forming neighbourhood gangs".

Identity and security: Yang's is not a subjective film in a conventional sense (it encompasses many more perspectives than can be outlined here), but Xiao Si'r obviously serves as a focal point; the movie follows this unformed adolescent from anonymity to notoriety.

Two touchingly delicate scenes both following meetings with the school principal - serve to show to what extent Si'r is his father's son. If he isn't sucked into gang culture, it is because he clings to his father's idealism. Zhang Ju is rather like one of the emasculated fathers in a James Dean delinquency melodrama: passive-progressive. His hopes for the future are inextricably tied to his faith in education (the film is framed by an opening scene in which he discusses his son's academic future, and a final, unsubtitled, radio transmission which broadcasts the names of those students who passed their school entrance exams). When his father's idealism proves unjustified or inadequate - when, for example, the school authorities reprimand Xiao Si'r for Sly's misdemeanour, or when Zhang Ju is arrested by the secret police - then the boy's quiet

reminiscent of Hou, favours long takes | resentment is pushed towards a dangerous pathology, so that in a confusion of pride and principle, violence becomes an act of self-assertion and even self-defence.

> Ming explicitly identifies Xiao Si'r with her beloved Honey (neither "can stand injustice," she says). The gang leader becomes a second father figure whom Si'r must emulate and supplant. Like Zhang Ju, Honey is an idealist, but he is also a more obvious hero, an activist, a leader and a rebel. "Only two types of people scare me," he tells his rival Shandong, "the type who aren't afraid to die and the type who know no shame." After his murder, Xiao Si'r offers himself as Ming's protector in Honey's place. Yang doesn't show us any physical intimacy between them, and it becomes clear that Xiao Si'r trusts in an unthreatening, innocent femininity (hence his belated rapport with his virginal sister, a devout Christian). When he can no longer ignore Ming's promiscuity - as her relationships with Tiger, Ma and Sly come to light - Xiao Si'r recoils from her physically until, crucially, she confronts him with his own fearsome vanity ("You can't ask others to do what you think is right... I'm like this world - it will never change").

> Yang has imbued melodrama with the resonance of tragedy. The film is both a critique of a certain kind of male romanticism (women here are slightly ambivalently - pragmatic realists) and an elegy for it. More importantly, Yang discreetly identifies this psychosexual turmoil with social upheaval, and a corrupt, repressive regime. If there is a glimmer of hope in this outwardly dark and pessimistic movie, it is to be found in the conviction with which Yang illuminates the past, and in the humanity which he finds there. An independent production that was three years in the making, this nuanced and richly complex work is all the more impressive in the light of the parlous state of the Taiwanese film industry, from which many technicians have fled in recent years (the director estimates that 60% of his crew and 75% of his cast had never made a film before). It is a great pity that such a film should be restricted to a mere seven-day release in London.

Tom Charity

Hoffa

USA 1992

Director: Danny DeVito

Certificate Distributor Guild **Production Company** 20th Century Fox In association with Jersey Films **Executive Producer** Joseph Isgro Producers Edward R. Pressman Danny DeVito Caldecot Chubb Co-producer Harold Schneider **Associate Producers** David Mamet

Wm. Barclay Malcolm **Production Co-ordinators** Sandra Maltz Karen R. Sachs **Unit Production Managers** Harold Schneider Grace Gilroy

Location Managers Michael Williams Robert H. Lemer Richard Klotz Casting David Rubin Debra Zane

Assistant Directors Ned Dowd Scott Senechal Fernando A. Castroman Screenplay

David Mamet Director of Photography Stephen H. Burum In colour

Camera Operators Dustin Blauvelt Additional: Bruce MacCallum William J. Gahret George Kohut Kristin R. Glover Steadicam Operator

Larry McConkey Editors Lynzee Klingman Ronald Roose **Production Designer** Ida Random

Art Director Gary Wissner **Set Designers** Charles Daboub Inr Robert Fechtman **Set Decorators** Brian Savegar

Set Dressers Edwin Lohrer III James Motyl Gus Feederle Michael Grady Greg Lynch

Gary Fettis

Gary Brewer Special Effects Co-ordinator John Frazier Special Effects Rocky Gehr Paul Ryan Francis Pennington Harold G. Selig Steve Luport Jan H. Aaris David Amborn

Arnie Peterson Music David Newman Music Editor Tom Villano

Songs

"Let's Make Love Tonight" by and performed by Nicky Addeo; "Hey Look Me Over" by Cy Coleman, Carolyn Leigh: "When You're Smiling" by Mark Fisher, Joe Goodwin, Larry Shay Costume Design Deborah L. Scott Wardrobe Supervisors: Darryl M. Athons Kendall Errair Mari Grimaud James Tyson Mark A. Peterson

Myron Baker Lori Stilson Greg Hall Dawn Line Tom Numbers **Elaine Ramires** Leslie Weir Pie Lombardi Make-up Artists Supervisor: Ve Neill John Blake

Donald Abbinanti Special Make-up Effects Greg Cannom Titles/Opticals Pacific Title Supervising Sound Editors Richard L. Anderson

Stephen H. Flick Sound Editors Marvin Walowitz Mike Chock John Dunn James Christopher Dean Beville Judee Flick Rick Mitchell David Bartlett **ADR Supervisor**

Nicholas V. Korda **ADR Editor** Norto Sepulveda Sound Recordists Thomas D. Causey Louis Countee Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Michael Minkler Kevin O'Connell Bill W. Benton ADR: Jeff Gomillion Foley: Jackson Schwartz Music: Tim Boyle Daniel Sharp

John W. Brilhante **Sound Transfers** Dave Moreno Matthew Beville Mark Coffey Foley Artists Zane D. Bruce Joseph T. Sabella

Visual Consultant Harold Michelson **Technical Advisers** Frank Ragano Nancy L. Ragano Stunt Co-ordinator Andy Armstrong Stunts

Richard Drown Danny Aiello III George Aguilar Gary Baxley Dana D. Bertolette Simone Boisseree Eddie Braun

Peter Bucossi Richard Butler Hank Calia Frank P. Calzavara Rudy J. Calzavara Ken Cervi Erik Cord

Leon Delaney

George Fisher Tanner Gill Mark Ginther Stefan Gudju John Hackett Mark Harper Jery Hewitt Robert Jauregui Jeff Jensen Sean Kelly Steven Lambert Rick LeFevour Stacy Logan Edward Lynch Gary Maas Daniel Maldonado Mike McGaughy Robert Orrison Richard "Pee Wee" Piemonte. Randy Popplewell Chere Rae Jimmy N. Roberts Walt Robles Maurizio Santia Paul E. Short Packy Smith Mark Stefanich

Bob Terhune

Steve Vandeman

Michael M. Vendrell

Donna Evans

Frank Ferrara

James Fierro

Eddie J. Fernandez I

Jim Waters Rich Wilkie Jerry Wills Raliegh Wilson Cast **Jack Nicholson** James R. Hoffa Danny DeVito Bobby Ciaro Armand Assante Carol D'Allesandro J.T. Walsh Frank Fitzsimmons John C. Reilly Pete Connelly Robert Prosky Billy Flynn Natalija Nogulich Josephine Hoffa **Kevin Anderson** Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy Frank Whaley Young Kid John P. Ryan Red Bennett Nicholas Pryor Hoffa's Attorney **Paul Guilfoyle** Ted Harmon Karen Young Young Woman at RTA **Cliff Gorman** Solly Stein Joanne Neer Soignee Woman Joe V. Greco Loading Foreman Jim Ochs Kreger Worker Joe Quasarano Dock Worker Don Brockett Police Captain Nicholas Giordano Cop **Dale Young** Father Doyle Jennifer Nicholson Nurse Nun in White

Don Vargo

Organiser

Assailant

Willy Rizzo

Tom Finnegan

Sam Nicotero

at Laundry

John Malloy

Counterman

Counterman

at Roadhouse

Louis Giambalvo

RTA Representative

Teamster President

Kirk Palmer Anderson

Driver with Flat

Scialla

Valentino Cimo

Driver with Pistol

Anthony Cannata

Robin Eurich Robert Maffia Reporters Gerry Becker **Business Negotiator Shirley Prestia** Hoffa's Secretary John Hackett Bladesdale Peter J. Reinemann Working Man Joey Dal Santo "Joey" Boy at RTA **Kevin Crowley** Reporter Tomasino Baratta D'Allesandro's Man Angela Block Hoffa's Daughter **Anna Marie Knierim** Teamster Widow Staci Marie Marcum Woman in Cabin Alton Bouchard **Dennis Tolkach** Airline Pilots John Judd Senate Policeman Jeffrey Howell Senate Reporter Fred Scialla Castratore

Christopher Otto Young Reporter **Annette DePetris** Newspaper Secretary William Cameron State Trooper Rudy E. Morrison Copa Thug Joannne Deak Woman in Penthouse Richard Schiff Government Attorney **Allison Robinson** Ciaro's Secretary **Steve Witting** Eliot Cookson Kathy Hartsell Dancer with Cigarette Philip Perlman

Sean P. Bello Party Crasher Robert Feist Bouncer Peter Spellos Man in Crowd Steven E. Goldsmith Bailiff Marty Perlov Bartender

Tim Gamble

Maitre D'

Prosecutor Judge Thomas A. Van Tiem Snr ludge Thomas D. Mahard Bartender **Gary Houston** Government Agent

in Bar Dinah Lynch Barbara Hoffa Jillian Alyse Cardillo Jacquiyne Marie Cardillo Grandaughters Chet Badalato

Hoffa's Driver **David Regal** Newsman Paul M. White Young Driver James"lke" Eichling Prison Guard **Dean Wells**

Bill Dalzell III Convicts Samson Barkhordarian Official at Hall Alex A. Kvassay Airplane Pilot **Larry John Meyers**

Newsman Cha Cha Ciarcia D'Ally's Financial Adviser Sherri Mazie Reporter Dave Shemo Young Reporter **David Calvin Berg**

Committee Chairman

Social Club Waiter

12,610 feet 140 minutes

David Sconduto

1975. Former Teamsters union leader Jimmy Hoffa and his right-hand man Bobby Ciaro sit in the back of a car in a roadhouse parking lot, waiting to meet mobster Carol D'Allesandro. Ciaro talks to a young trucker and remembers the course of his relationship with Hoffa, which starts in the 1930s when he is a truck driver and Hoffa an itinerant organizer for the Teamsters. They meet later when Hoffa is trying to organize a strike at a shipping terminus. Ciaro wants to kill Hoffa for losing him his job, but joins with him and his associate Billy Flynn to firebomb a laundry; Fylnn is killed. During a strike, in which several people are killed, Hoffa meets the Mafia and cuts his first deal to end the strike. At the funeral following the strike. Hoffa meets with gangster Carol D'Allesandro. On a hunting trip, Hoffa and D'Allesandro work out the means by which the Teamsters will legally loan money to the Mob for their ventures in Nevada.

At Senate hearings into the relationship between labour and organized crime, senate lawyer Bobby Kennedy warns Hoffa that he will go to prison. Hoffa is exonerated and elected as union head. Hoffa and Ciaro are arrested for the Teamsters' illegal loans; when Hoffa is released, he finds that the pardon is dependent on his remaining out of union politics. Hoping to reclaim the union, Hoffa arranges to meet D'Allesandro, threatening to reveal the Teamsters-Mob link unless he helps him. Hoffa and Ciaro are shot in the parking lot by the young trucker.

Hoffa gives the grandiose biopic treatment to the life of American labour organiser and union president Jimmy Hoffa, presumed murdered by parties unknown, presumably in a political struggle for the control of the Teamsters. Presumably, because his body has never been found. Scene to scene. Hoffa feels like a near-masterpiece. Nobody writes beefy guys sitting around a room better than David Mamet, and in this high blood-pressure cast, director DeVito has a cast capable of understanding and delivering all the fine gradations that Mamet can get from the work "Fuck". He is a fluent enough director to give scenes the necessary charge, from a battle between striking workers and management scabs to two men talking in a car. Only when the scenes are strung together, cemented by the continued returns to the parking lot, does the film's main flaw become apparent. In attempting to cover almost all of Hoffa's career, DeVito has created a picture that really has no narrative line.

On the one hand, there is too much material for a conventionally-sized movie. Hoffa's career spanned four decades, from the desperation of the Depression, when management hired goons to break the bodies and spirits of striking workers, to the 70s, when the Teamsters were the most powerful labour union in the United States. It touches on all manner of modern

American history, including the rise of Las Vegas and the death of John F Kennedy. There is, after all, already a four-hour television film (1983's Blood Feud) that deals entirely with the battle between Hoffa and Bobby Kennedy.

On the other hand, DeVito has such a simplistic, even worshipful view of Hoffa that he can only see him as his hero, the plucky labour organizer who "pulled the American worker into the middle class." Well, he did, and he was a hero. But Hoffa's ambiguity frightens DeVito. The friend of the working man was also a friend to organized crime. The Teamsters Pension Fund's loans to the Mob financed the building of Caesar's Palace, the Chicago mob's purchase of the Stardust Hotel in 1974, the resurrection of The Dunes in 1956, and the completion of the Landmark in 1966. Hoffa controlled those purse strings. With its Vegas connection, Hoffa is this year's Bugsy, an overlong biopic with a problematic view of its central character. There is even a school of conspiratorial thought that links Hoffa and the Teamsters to the assassination of Kennedy, and no tears were shed in Hoffa's office when JFK was assassinated - Hoffa saw the flags at the Teamsters' headquarters at halfmast and flew into a rage.

DeVito will not allow the young hero to become an aged tyrant, the rebel to become an aged reactionary. It seems to me that the most interesting thing about Hoffa's character lies in the moment when he moved from hungry outsider to powerful insider, when he became corrupted by his power. DeVito gives us a pointless scene noting Hoffa's election as president of the Teamsters, but never mentions the strong possibility that Hoffa ratted out his predecessor, Dave Beck, to the Justice Department.

DeVito has cut together a story from Mamet's script that redefines the word "fragmentary", refuses to locate us in time, and feels as if it were cut from four hours. Characters leap in and out of the narrative for no apparent reason - a young woman (Karen Young) receives such prominence at a strike that one assumes she's the future Mrs Hoffa, but she isn't, and promptly disappears. A demonized Bobby Kennedy has prominence as the film's chief villain, but the two Kennedy assassinations pass unnoticed. One moment Hoffa has two children, a few scenes later he's a grandfather.

Unfortunately, Hoffa forms the least interesting panel of the recent triptych of 60s assassination films, beside JFK and Malcolm X. As a director, DeVito has neither Oliver Stone's tabloid sensationalism nor Spike Lee's political dedication. Like other TV actors turned director - Rob Reiner, Penny Marshall, Ron Howard - he is technically assured and very good with actors, but lacks any particular philosophical or political viewpoint. In the light of recent video revisionism, maybe Hoffa will get the 'director's cut' treatment when it arrives on home video. Few films could benefit more.

John Harkness

Indochine

France 1991

Director: Régis Wargnier

Certificate
12
Distributor
Electric Pictures
Production Companies

Production Companies
Paradis Films and
Général D'Images/
BAC Films/Orly Films/
Ciné Cinq
Evacutive Producers

Alain Belmondo
Gérard Crosnier

Executive in Charge

N'Guyen Thu
Producer
Eric Heumann
Line Producers
Eric Heumann

of Production

Vietnam:

Jean Labadie
Associate Producers
Alain Guiraud
Pierre Héros
Roger-André Larrieu
Alain Vannier

Production Supervisor
Chandran Rutnam
Production Managers
Claude Albouze
Jean De Tregomain
Ngo Xuan Yem
Ainsley Da Silva

Edi Hubschmid

Casting

Pierre Amzallag

Assistant Directors

Jacques Cluzaud

Nguyen Lan Trung

Dane Tat Binh

Screenplay
Erik Orsenna
Louis Gardel
Catherine Cohen
Régis Wargnier
Director of Photography
François Catonné

François Catonné Camera Operator Jean-Paul Meurisse Editor Geneviève Winding

Production Designer
Jacques Bufnoir
Set Decorator
Errol Kelly
Special Effects
Philippe Hubin
Music

Patrick Doyle
Orchestrations
Lawrence Ashmore
Music Producer
Roy Prendegast
Music Supervisor

Songs
"La Môme Caoutchouc"
by Maurice Yvain; "La
Baya" by M. Heurtebise,
Christiné performed
by Dominique Blanc

Choreographer
Chris Gandois
Wardrobe
Gabriella Pescucci

Pierre-Yves Gayraud Make-up Cédric Gérard Sound Editor

Patrice Grisolet

Sound Recordists

Chris Dibble

Guillanme Sciama

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Francis Perreard

Sound Re-recordists

Dominique Hennequin

Joël Rangon

Sound Effects

Advisers
Asoka Perera
Historical:
Nelly Krawolski
Benjamin Stora

Jérôme Levy

Cast
Catherine Deneuve
Eliane
Vincent Perez
Jean-Baptiste

Linh Dan Pham
Camille
Jean Yanne
Guy
Dominique Blanc

Henri Marteau
ms/ Emile
Carlo Brandt
Castellani

Gérard Lartigau
The Admiral
Hubert Saint-Macary
Raymond
Andrzej Seweryn
Hébrard

Mai Chau
Shen
Alain Fromager
Dominique
Chu Hung
Mari de Sao
Jean-Baptiste Huynh
Etienne (as an adult)

Thibault De Montalembert Charles-Henri Eric Nguyen Tanh Trinh Van Thinh

Minh
Tien Tho
Xuy
Thi Hoe Tranh Huu Trieu
Mme Minh Tam
Nguyen Lan Trung

Nhu Quynh
Sao
Michel Voita
Edmont de Beaufort
Martin Barre Astich
Child
Lam Binh

Dying Missionary

Tat Binh

The Leading Citizen

Nguyen Huu Bong

Mme Minh Tam's Clien

Mme Minh Tam's Client
Jean-Pierre Debris
Father Roland
Clayton Dowty
Charlotte
Anoy Ew Lek Ee
Child in Sampan

Edgar Givry
Auctioneer
Quang Hai
Brother of On Dinh
Ngo Hoa

Old Mandarin

Ba Hoang

Camille, age 5

Hong Khien

Midwife

Gia Khoan

Actor (Bird Dancer)

Hoang Kiem

Actor (Kim Lan)

M. Lap

Old Man with Spectacles

Anna Lim

Van Quy
Son of Sao, age 16
Dhevankar Supplah
Satait
Mme Ta

The Dowager

Julie Tan
Hoa
Thoy Ten
Actress (Bird Dancer)
Ngoc Thoa
Prisoner (Poulo Condor)
Nguyen Van Thoi

Trang Vonh
Trong Thuy
Son of Sao, age 12
Jean De Tregomain
Lieutenant in Nursing
Village
Dang Si Van
The Old Man in Tonkin

Hai Yen Theatre Musician

Subtitles

13,885 feet

154 minutes

are beginning to struggle against French colonial rule. Eliane Devries runs a rubber plantation in the South, with her father and adopted teenage daughter Camille, an orphaned Vietnamese princess. She is also a friend of Guy Asselin, the local chief of the French Security police. Eliane has a short passionate affair with Jean-Baptiste, a young French naval officer; but when he later meets Camille, she falls in love with him, and Eliane has him sent to Dragon Island, a remote outpost in North Vietnam.

Camille breaks her arranged marriage to her childhood friend Tahn, and flees in search of Jean-Baptiste, dis-

French Indochina (Vietnam) in

the early 1930s; the Vietnamese

riage to her childhood friend Tahn, and flees in search of Jean-Baptiste, discovering in the process the poverty of her country. On reaching him, she witnesses the brutal repression of Vietnamese workers at a slave market, and shoots a French officer dead. She and Jean-Baptiste flee in a small boat across the bay of Halong, from which it is alleged no-one returns alive. They are sheltered by Nationalist rebels, later joining a travelling theatre group spreading rebellion under cover of their traditional spectacle. Camille gives birth to a son, Etienne. Jean-Baptiste and the baby are arrested, and eventually Camille is sent to a labour camp, as her legend as the 'red princess' grows.

Meanwhile, Eliane brings the baby up. On his way to be court-marshalled in France, Jean-Baptiste visits his son, but is later found dead, having apparently comitted suicide (though Asselin may have had him killed). When the 1936 Popular Front government proclaims political amnesty, Camille is released from the camp. Eliane goes to meet her, but Camille decides to break free and join the Independence struggle. Eliane leaves Vietnam for good, taking Etienne with her. Much later, they attend the 1954 Geneva conference negotiating the end of French rule in Indochina. Camille is part of the Vietnamese delegation, but Etienne declines to meet her, telling Eliane, "You are my mother".

Indochine is a successful film insofar as the reasons why it is worth watching are the reasons why it was made: Catherine Deneuve and the Vietnamese landscape. As a recreation of the French colonial past, on the other hand, it leaves a lot to be desired. But then, like most heritage films, Indochine (the title itself is nostalgic) is less interested in analysing a historical moment than in celebrating its memory and mourning its loss. Thus, appropriately, the film opens and closes on Deneuve in black, and it is littered with references to deaths and separations.

Unsurprisingly for a mainstream entertainment, instead of hitting on the underlying political and economic reasons for the French presence in Vietnam, *Indochine* (like Jean-Jacques Annaud's *L'Amant*) dwells on exotic and nostalgic iconography: Deneuve's exquisite outfits, cars and gramophones, the 'inscrutable' faces of the

locals, pointed hats, and the obligatory opium-smoking paraphernalia. The burden of the 'real' (exploitation, repression, torture) is borne largely by the character of Guy Asselin, the Security police chief whose brutal methods are briefly exposed and condemned but the effect of even this intrusion is diminished by the fact that Asselin is in love with Eliane, and that he is played by Jean Yanne, an actor with a long-established image as a likeable rogue. The other token of colonial malfunction is the naval officers' implication in the slave market at Dragon Island, but this too is exonerated in two ways: by showing the participation of the Vietnamese in it, and by concentrating the 'bad' colonial ideology in the figure of the decadent cynic whom Camille shoots.

'Good' colonialism, of course, is embodied by Eliane/Deneuve. The matrilineal vision of history offered by the film enables it to represent French imperialism as not only liberal, but natural. In the very obvious central metaphor of the film, Eliane-France adopts Camille-Vietnam; she 'inherits' Camille's land on the convenient disappearance of her parents, and nurtures the frail child into a good and enlightened life (in the same way as the young revolutionary Tanh learnt the very concept of freedom in the French education system); the onset of revolution is echoed in the birth of Etienne. Togetherness - of mother and daughter, of France and Vietnam - is a state of blissful childhood, and therefore one to be universally regretted when it is over. More pervasively, Eliane, while imbued with 'masculine' qualities of leadership and courage, is a universal mother: to Camille and later Etienne. but also to her own (weak) father; to Jean-Baptiste; to her Vietnamese workers; and even to Asselin. In the absence of heroic male deeds to attach to French rule in Vietnam (the film erases military conflict and most significantly the crushing defeat of the French army at Dien Bien Phu in 1954), the abstract heroism of the suffering mother, doubling up as tough leader, celebrates the symbolic notion of France as universal mère patrie (literally mother-fatherland). But as well as a mother, Eliane is a sexual woman. Indochine in this respect provides the classic pleasures of the romantic women's film: a beautiful, tragic but resilient, female heroine struggles on, surrounded by adoring men who nevertheless fail her, providing the mature Deneuve with her best part in many years.

Given the self-serving French version of history offered by Indochine, Vietnam is inevitably turned into a spectacle (and a sexual one, for instance in the two narratively unnecessary shots of Camille's naked breasts) though a spectacle which is often more than a backdrop, especially in the breathtaking shots of the bay of Halong. It is a major, and enjoyable, participant in the story, its beauty reinforcing the film's deep sense of nostalgia.

Ginette Vincendeau

Leap of Faith

USA 1992

Director: Richard Pearce

Certificate Distributor

Production Company Paramount Pictures **Executive Producer** Ralph S. Singleton Producers Michael Manheim

David V. Picker **Associate Producers** Janus Cercone Burt Bluestein Roger Joseph Pugliese **Production Associate** Steven Lukanic **Unit Production Managers**

Burt Bluestein Roger Joseph Pugliese **Location Managers** William Bowling Mike Casey 2nd Unit Director Garth Craven

Casting Gretchen Rennell Voice: Barbara Harris **Assistant Directors** Doug Metzger Anthony Brand Linda Brachman Brian Steward Xochi Blymyer 2nd Unit:

John E. Hockridge Screenplay Janus Cercone Director of Photography Matthew F. Leonetti Colour

2nd Unit Directors of Photography Lloyd Ahern Roger Lee Smith Camera Operator David E. Diano Steadicam Operators Ted Churchill

Deluxe

Peter Jensen Video Displays Video Image Don Zimmerman Mark Warner John F. Burnett **Production Designer** Patrizia Von

Brandenstein Art Director Dennis Bradford Set Decorator Gretchen Rau Set Dressers John Ceniceros Paul Perry

Jean-Paul Menard Special Effects Burt Dalton Eddie Surkin Music Cliff Eidelman

Orchestrations Mark McKenzie Dennis Dreith **Music Supervisors** Kathy Nelson Production:

Daniel Allan Carlin Supervising Music Editors Jeff Carson Charles Martin Inouye

Songs "Sit Down You're Rockin' the Boat" by Frank Loesser, performed by Don Henley: "Paradise by the Dashboard Light" by Jim Steinman, performed by Meat Loaf; "Change In My Life" by Billy Straus, "Ready For A Miracle" by Art Reynolds, Bunny Hull, "Blessed

Assurance" by Fanny Crosby, Mrs Joseph F. Knapp, "Lord Will Make A Way (Somehow)" by Thomas A. Dorsey, "God Said He Would See You Through by Rev. Milton R. Biggham, "My Faith Looks Up to Thee" by Ray Palmer. Lowell Mason, "God Will Take Care of You" by Edwin Hawkins, "It's A Highway to Heaven" by Mary Gardner, Thomas A. Dorsey, "Jesus on the Mainline" by Edwin Hawkins, George Duke. "Bringing in the Sheaves" by Knowles Shaw, George A. Minor, "Psalm 27", "Amazing Grace" by John Newton, performed by Angels of Mercy; "What It Takes" by and performed by Brendan Croker: "Stones Throw From Hurtin'" by Elton John, Bernie Taupin, peformed by Wynonna; "No Future in the Past" by Carl Jackson, Vince Gill, performed by Vince Gill: "Pass Me Not" by Fanny J. Crosby, W. H. Doane, performed by Lyle Lovett, George Duke: "Yakety Yak" by Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller; "Ready For A Miracle" by Art Reynolds, Bunny Hull, performed by Patti Labelle, Edwin Hawkins; "Organ Interludes" by Jerry Peters Choreography

Sharon Kinney Mary Ann Kellogg Costume Design Theadora Van Runkle Costume Supervisor Nancy McArdle Make-up Artists Key: Bradley W. Wilder Frank H. Griffin Jnr Karen Blynder Regina Rutherford Rhonda Higgins **Title Design** Robert Dawson Opticals Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors Bruce Richardson Cecelia Hall Sound Editors Dialogue: Michael Magill Karen Spangenberg Midge Costin Supervising ADR Editor Juno J. Ellis ADR Editor

Steven Janisz Supervising Foley Editor Pam Bentowski Foley Editors Tom Stevens Jim Klinger **Sound Recordists** Petur Hliddal ADR: Bob Baron Foley: Eric Gotthelf Music Joseph Magee

Armin Steiner

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Steve F. B. Smith

Sound Re-recordists Andy Nelson Steve Maslow Steve M. Pederson Sound Effects Editors Joseph Ippolito Beth Sterner John Leveque Frank Howard Foley Artists David Lee Fein Ken Dufva **Medical Consultant** Dr John F. Zambetti **Cons and Frauds** Consultant Ricky Jay **Butterfly Handlers** Jim Brockett Chris Durden Agronomists Clay D Salisbury Brent W Bean

Cast

Vernon Grote

Mary Jackson

Emma Schlarp

Margaret Bowman

Woman With

Cherries Hat

Jennifer Snyder

Deborah Hope

Ed K. Geldart

Brown Jacket

Marietta Marich

Mrs Hawkins

Grover Washington

Salvador Hernandez

Weather Worn Woman

Old Black Man

Suzi McLaughlin

Young Man

Nineteen

Jake

Blue Deckert

Jane Milburn

Norm Colvin

Maria Arita

Dave Hager

Jason McGuire

Melodee Bowman

Calvin's Wife

Cornelius Clark

Rev. Tommy Ray Green

Tough Kid

Shirley Ash

Angela Blair

Georgia Ellis

Felicia House

La Dale Kemp

Lizz Lee

Tarsha Jackson

Lawrence Matthews

Shun Pace-Rhodes

Stephanie Stephens

Cherrie Thompson

Leon P. Turner

Gabrielle West

Leroy Williams

Eugene Young IV

9,708 feet

108 minutes

Gheri LeGree-McDonald

Lynette Hawkins Stephens

Lulanger Washington III

Trucker

Female TV Anchor

Man 1

Casey Hammer

Glitter Jeans Girl

Glitter Jeans Mother

Rafe

Steve Martin Jonas Debra Winger ane **Lolita Davidovich** Marva Liam Neeson Will Lukas Haas Boyd Meat Loaf Hoover Philip Seymour Hoffman Matt M.C. Gainey Tiny La Chanze Georgette **Delores Hall** Ornella John Toles-Bey Titus Albertina Walker Lucille **Ricky Dillard** Ricky **Vince Davis** Roger **Troy Evans** Dade **Phyllis Somerville**

David L. Emmons Jerry Joe **Mark Walters** Calvin James N. Harrell

Dolores

Ramsey

The first in a fleet of coaches and trucks belonging to religious con-man Jonas Nightengale's travelling preaching show is stopped by a patrolman on a Kansas highway. The driver has a drunk driving record, so Nightengale tells the cop that he was driving, winning a bet with his travelling manager Jane, driver Hoover and other partners in crime that he can get away with it. The party stops at the nearest town, Rustwater, for a few days while one of the trucks is being mended, and Jonas decides to set up his show there. At the local diner, he tries to flirt with Marva, the waitress, and impress her with his religious stories, but she rebuffs him coolly.

Jonas and Jane ask Will, the local sheriff, for a licence to put up their tent. He tells them that the townspeople, plagued by lack of rain, are too poor to give their money away, but when Jonas threatens him, he hands over a licence. Jane finds out all the necessary socio-economic facts about Rustwater for Jonas' performance and the couple and their gang go around town persuading people to come to their religious meeting, while the gospel choir practices and the tent is erected. Jonas successfully does his act

to a full tent, monitored by Jane who feeds him information from a bank of short circuit televisions and two-way radios. Will appeals to the troupe to leave but Jonas, justifying the show as cheap entertainment, is adamant on staying. Jane, who is attracted to Will, goes drinking with him.

The next day, a woman, touched by Jonas' "godliness", gives him a jar of pickles for one of the poor families he had brought on stage the previous night. Instead, he gives the pickles to the women in the diner, where he is beaten at chess by Marva's crippled kid brother Boyd. Marva explains that Boyd was in the car accident that killed their parents, and tells Jonas to stay away from him. Later, Jonas tries to deflect the boy's eager faith with cynicism. Jane, meanwhile, goes to Will's ranch where he shows her a field full of butterflies.

show, Will At that evening's denounces Jonas as a fake, but the preacher turns the situation to his advantage, giving everyone their money back. Later that night, Jonas paints open the eyes of a statue of Christ; everyone believes a miracle has take place, and soon Rustwater has become a tourist attraction. At the next show, everyone comes to give Jonas back their money. Boyd is also there, asking to be cured, and Jonas finds himself forced to oblige by the ecstatic crowd. Suddenly, Boyd walks again and Jonas is hailed as a hero. The rest of the gang talk about incorporating Boyd into the act, and Jonas agrees; but when Boyd has gone, Jonas asks Marva to apologise to her brother for him. Jane and Will decide to stay together. Jonas packs and leaves, hitching a ride with a truck driver. On the road, it starts to rain and again the townspeople are ecstatic. Jane and Will go to Jonas's motel room to find that he has left her his mirrored show jacket, a ring she always wanted and a note. Jonas speeds away in the truck, cheering the rain.

If Steve Martin has to be in a 'serious' film, then the ebullient, acrobatic show-off Jonas Nightengale is probably the perfect character for him to play. As the evangelical con-man, endlessly taking rash chances and trusting in his own skills - in much the same way as he tells his congregation to trust in the Lord - he is in his element. His hair dyed blond, his clothes a mixture of rocker and glittery showman, his manner a combination of charming and shamelessly crass, Martin gleefully exploits that glint of hardness at the heart of many of his more comic personae. Such is Jonas' power that he can revel in inconsistencies in his life story, safe in the knowledge that everyone will still believe him because they want to. Such is his vanity that he can at once 'preach' God's word, roll out old tricks and flirt with Marva. And those scenes of Jonas in action are a tour de force. Watched not only by us, but also by Jane, commenting masterclass-style from her remote control heaven, he whips the crowd into hysteria. them down with exaggerated relish.

But Jonas is not always in full control; he's also seen as childishly impotent: despite Jane's barbed comments about him picking up women on the road, his efforts to attract Marva seem touching rather than sexual. In fact, contrasted with the sensuality between Jane and Will, Jonas seems curiously sexless. That dimension of sympathy for Jonas and Jane makes for a resolutely amoral film. While we might agree with the sentiments of Liam's Neeson's stoical sheriff, concerned with his people's social and political situation, we're asked to share at least some of Jonas and Jane's attitude that people are happy to pay for their cathartic show, complete with lights, glitter and entertainment. The question the film should ask, perhaps, is how complicit the audience really is in the deception.

Leap Of Faith's attitude towards the religious followers puts it in more of a quandary. Firstly, there's an irritating implication in the idea that Jonas' black gospel singers believe in him because they're stupid enough to hence one scene in which Jonas explains the word of God to a couple of black women in full, eye-rolling Butterfly McQueen mode - while the white townsfolk come to Jonas out of despair at their lives. The amalgamation of black gospel and white evangelism also smacks of the sickly all-togetherness of Sister Act, paying little attention to harsher realities.

Secondly, the role of the believers in film changes abruptly. One minute, they're characterised Jonas's dupes; the next, their naive belief is proved right. As the rather ponderous title suggests, miracles do happen; Jonas has to learn what they (and particularly Boyd) already know how to take a leap of faith. And so the film opts for the It's A Wonderful Life approach to joy - one happy man and the big happy crowd. But unlike Capra's film, in which the emotional release is a necessary step, here it comes over as sticky icing on the cake and an inadequately sentimental replacement for its earlier, noisy cynicism.

When the jokey satire on religionturned-big-business in the technological age can't come up with a suitable way out, it turns into an American folk tale, sweeping everything up into grand mythic significance with the coming of the rain and the parable of the crippled boy who walks again. Though Lukas Haas does a great job of portraying the saintly Boyd with the minimum of gush, everything about the film - from Martin's loadedly funny set pieces to the strong performances from Winger, Neeson and Davidovich - is considerably more entertaining before it shifts from negative to positive. Perhaps it should have been more magically shameless; looking to its Kansas-set predecessor. The Wizard of Oz, for a less workaday attitude to the mid-West myth.

Amanda Lipman

Mediterraneo

Italy 1991

Director: Gabriele Salvatores

Certificate Distributor Mayfair Entertainment **Production Companies** Penta Film/AMA Film/ Silvio Berlusconi Communications **Executive Producers** Mario Cecchi Gori Vittorio Cecchi Gori **Producer** Gianni Minervini **Production Managers** Alessandro Vivarelli Nicoló Forte **Assistant Director** Antonella Licata Screenplay Vincenzo Monteleone Director of Photography

Italo Pettriccione Colour Technicolor Camera Operator Cristina Balboni Editor Nino Baragali **Art Director** Thalia Istikopoulos Set Dresser E. Rancati Special Effects G. Corridori Music

Giancarlo Bigazzi Marco Falagiani Music Performed by Ensemble Micrologus Santouri/Bouzouki: Adolfo Broegg Gavala/Bagpipes/ Zurnae: Goffredo degli Esposti Tubeleki/Daouli/

Ribeca/Lyre/Violin: Gabriele Russo Drums: Massimo Pacciani Guitar: Riccardo Galardini Saxophone: Massimo Barbieri

Maurizio Picchió

Percussion:

Music Arrangements Marco Falagiani **Costume Design** Francesco Panni Make-up Artist Luigi Rocchetti Penta Studios **Sound Recordists** Tiziano Crotti Music: Massimo Barbieri Sound Re-recordists Rodolfo Bianchi Music: Romano Checcacci

Cast Diego Abatantuono Sergeant Lo Russo Claudio Bigagli Lieutenant Montini Giuseppe Cederna Farina Claudio Bisio Noventa Gigio Alberti Strazzabosco Ugo Conti Colosanti Memo Dini Felice Munaron Vasco Mirondola Libero Munaron Vanna Barba Vasilissa Luigi Montini Pope Irene Grazioli Shepherdess Antonio Catania Pilot 8,088 feet

90 minutes

Subtitles

At the outbreak of the Second World War, eight Italian soldiers, together with a donkey, are posted to a remote island in the Aegean to defend it for the Fascists. The group comprises the cultured Lieutenant Montini, the unloved orphan Farina, the brothers Felice and Libero Munaron, who dislike the sea, the obstreperous Lo Russo, the forlorn Strazzabosco, who adores his pet donkey, the pining Noventa, who can't wait to return to his pregnant wife, and the shy Colosanti. When they arrive, they are confronted by graffiti declaiming "Greece is the tomb of Italians"; during their first-night vigil. they hear suspicious sounds and, panicking, accidentally kill the donkey. Grief-stricken Strazzabosco hurls the unit's radio to the ground, breaking it. The same evening, they see a series of explosions destroy their battleship, effectively cutting them off from the war and their mother country.

Farina discovers a crowd of children who lead the Italians to a small Greek community whose young men have been taken prisoner by the Germans. Slowly, the soldiers begin to relax, seduced by the island's leisurely way of



life. Montini is invited to paint frescoes on the walls of the local chapel, the two brothers embark on a playful ménage à trois with a beautiful shepherdess, Farina begins to appreciate ancient Greek poetry and falls in love with Vasilissa, the prostitute who services his colleagues; and Lo Russo finds an outlet for his macho posturing in folk dancing. When a Turkish trader arrives, supplying them with hashish before stealing their weapons and valuables, the men feel liberated rather than dismayed. With the exception of Noventa, they vote to settle on the island. Farina marries Vasilissa, while Strazzabosco finds a new donkey.

One day, a Sicilian makes an emergency landing on the island, bringing news that Mussolini has fallen, Italy is in a state of civil war and Fascism is on the run. Lo Russo dreams of returning to help rebuild the country. Some time later, an English ship arrives to return all the young Greek men captured by the Germans, and to take back the Italians to their native land. Farina hides so that he can stay behind, while Strazzabosco takes his donkey with him. Many years later, an elderly Montini visits the island, now overrun by tourists, to look up Farina. To his surprise, he finds a disillusioned Lo Russo there as well. Vasilissa has died and the three men reflect that life after their idyllic interlude has failed to live up to their expectations.

With a handful of exceptions, cinematic images of the Mediterranean have become depressingly superficial, offering blissful release from tawdry routine and bleak Northern cityscapes in blood-red sunsets, the strains of a bouzouki and a shot of ouzo. Such movies used to be made with wit and irony - Jules Dassin's Never on Sunday, for example. Sadly, they have lapsed into the likes of Shirley Valentine and the tired jollity

of the down-market travelogue.

Gabriele Salvatores' escapist comedy, loosely based on a true story, falls into all the familiar traps. It rests too comfortably for its own good on a string of clichés: lovable, incompetent Italian soldiers ("Pizza Margherita" is their first password), thieving Turks, pink-faced, stiff-backed English officers, a virgin looking for love, a buxom whore with a heart, and any amount of balmy evenings of hard drinking and soft landings. "Una faccia, una razza" ("One face, one race") is the theme, that cry of Southern Mediterranean solidarity which unites those who champion the hedonistic life against those who are too uptight to enjoy it.

Salvatores is most successful in his depiction of war as a suspension of normal activity which, given some good fortune, can be as uplifting as it is traumatic. If the team of soldiers at times appear to be on an extended 'Simply Greece' package holiday, this is no doubt how it was for those lucky enough to find romance, exoticism and peace amid the mayhem. A couple of Mediterraneo's protagonists, when their idyll comes to an end, look forward to a bright new future in their homeland "There are great ideals at stake and a lot of money to be made," says one of them), but disappointment inexorably looms. "We'll build a great nation," promises the bellicose Lo Russo; the domesticated Farina, however, declares that he feels most alive inside his olive barrel refuge. In a surprisingly bitter coda, both men are found on the island many years later by their former commander, having coped with death and disillusionment ("They didn't let us change anything," complains Lo Russo). The end of the film sees them peeling aubergines in the back of a noisy taverna full of teenage tourists, reflecting soberly on the reality of their Mediterranean experience.

Peter Aspden

A Midnight Clear

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USA 1991

Screenplay

Keith Gordon

Tom Richmond

2nd Camera Operator

Patrick Reddish

Donald Brochu

David Nichols

Art Director

Set Design

David Lubin

Kalina Ivanov

Jeff McDonald

Set Decorator

lanis Lubin

Scenic Artists

Ed McAvoy

Gigi Lorick

Special Effects

Rick Josephsen

Gay Nickle Lauritzen

"The Jersey Bounce"

by Buddy Feyne, Bobby

Platter, Tina Bradshaw,

Came Upon a Midnight

Edward Johnson; "It

Clear" performed

by Sam Phillips

Costume Design

Barbara Tfank

Co-ordinator

Mark Isham

Sculptor

Music

Songs

John Chad Davis

Production Designer

Colour

Editor

Based on the novel

by William Wharton

Director of Photography

Director: Keith Gordon

Certificate Costume Supervisor Lawane Cole Distributor Make-up Rank Gina Homan **Production Company** Special Make-up Effects Doug White Beacon Titles/Opticals Communications Pacific Title present an A&M Films production Sound Design **Executive Producers** Douglas Murray Armyan Bernstein Sound Editor Tom Rosenberg John Nutt Marc Abraham ADR Editor Mark Levinson Producers Dale Pollock **Foley Editor** Bill Borden Samuel H. Hinckley Sound Recordists Margaret Hilliard John "Earl" Stein **Production Executives** Dan Olmsted Thomas Bliss **Foley Recordist** Sona Partayan Michael Semanick **Production Associate** Dolby stereo Sound Re-recordists Jenny Manriquez Production Co-ordinator Mark Berger Judi Voye David Parker Unit Production Manager **Foley Artists** Margaret Hilliard Margie O'Malley **Location Manager** Jennifer Myers Carole Fontana **Technical Advisers** Post-production C'est la Guerre Co-ordinator **Snow Management** Arlan Kohler Jenny Manriquez Casting Phil Sharp Gary Zuckerbrod **Music Consultant Assistant Directors** G. Mark Roswell Scott Javine **Stunt Co-ordinator** Andrew Langton Steve Davison Troy Rohovit Stunts

> Cast Peter Berg Bud Miller **Kevin Dillon** Mel Avakian Arye Gross Stan Shutzer Ethan Hawke Will Knott **Gary Sinise** 'Mother' Wilkins Frank Whaley 'Father' Mundy John C. McGinley Major Griffin Larry Joshua Lieutenant Ware **Curt Lowens** German Soldier **David Jensen** Sergeant Hunt Rachel Griffin Janice Tim Shoemaker Morrie **Kelly Gateley** Young German Bill Osborn American Sentry

Andre Lama!

German

9,753 feet

108 minutes

Tim Davison

Paul Godwin

Chad Camilleri

Norman Howell

The Ardennes, 1944. US Army Sergeant Will Knott (known as Wont) witnesses the breakdown of Wilkins ('Mother') whilst on guard duty. Wont manages to keep the incident quiet. His Intelligence and Reconnaissance unit is down to six (Avakian, Miller, 'Father' Mundy, Stan Shutzer) from 12, thanks to the cavalier missions that Major (Love) Griffin keeps sending them on. En route to occupy an isolated chateau, Wont's unit are

unsettled to find a German and an American soldier locked together in a frozen embrace.

At the chateau they find mattresses, blankets and cases of vintage wine but no sign of enemy soldiers. Their sojourn is shattered one night when unseen German voices urge them to sleep well. After Wont and Father find Germans lobbing snowballs into their sentry post, the unit finds a shack occupied by young soldiers but are unable to shoot their easy targets. Shutzer and Wont are surprised by three other Germans who despite having the Americans in their sights let them walk away. In the confusion, Schutzer loses his telescope lens and map. Further incidents convince Wont that the Germans want to meet. It turns out that the Germans wish to surrender, but they request a mock battle to convince the approaching Russian front soldiers of their bravery. The Americans decide to play along, but don't tell Mother because they feel he cannot be relied upon. The mock battle goes smoothly until a German drops dead from a bullet wound. Mother, having followed the others, misinterprets the action and decides to rescue his unit. Suspecting a double cross, the Germans fire back, wounding Schutzer and killing Mundy. Mundy's dying wish is for Mother not to be told, so that his bravery can be rewarded by the Army.

Griffin arrives and chastises Wont for the sloppy use of the chateau, ordering him and the remaining three soldiers to stay until the German offensive begins. Lumbered with Mundy's body, the group beat a hasty retreat. A return to base reveals that Griffin has already pulled out. Lost and forced to abandon their vehicle, Wont and the others evade capture by painting red crosses on themselves with Mundy's blood and carry the body across the frozen countryside. They encounter their own unit, and Wont's story of capture and escape from the SS is accepted. He is told of Shutzer's death and told he can return to the front.

William Wharton's A Midnight Clear (1982) was seized on by many critics as the next Catch-22. But this was a knee-jerk reaction to the more absurdist elements in the novel, specifically embodied by the anally compromised mind of Griffin, a mortician in civilian life, who dreams of military glory by bestowing a series of nightmare missions on his unit. However, Wharton took the trouble to look back beyond World War 2 by having Wont's men read All Quiet On The Western Front and A Farewell To Arms before setting off on their next suicide mission.

In so doing the author clearly distanced himself from the cold objective surrealism of Heller, and paved the way for his heroes' encounter with the boy soldiers on the opposing side (cf. Remarque), as well as their attempt to break away from the rituals of warfare by making a "separate peace" with the enemy (as Hemingway's Lt Henry does by deserting the Army with his lover in Farewell). One of the strengths of director-writer Keith Gordon's adaptation is the dovetailing of these literary anti-war landmarks with more cynical cinematic reference points (specifically Robert Aldrich) without losing Wharton's humanistic tone.

The film begins familiarly with the establishment of the wet-behind-theears platoon and the muddy haemoglobinised terrain they are fighting on. Once the unit is dispatched away from the Army into the forest (the dirty dozen having been whittled down to a cerebral six), the film successfully teases expectations by using genre familiarity to its own advantage. The grotesque splicing together by an unknown presence of the German and American soldiers found in the snow alludes to Deliverance (a frozen hand sticks out of the ground pointing nowhere) and Walter Hill's Southern Comfort; but Gordon shies away from any exercises in macho suffering, allowing a more languid disorientation process to unfold with the unit's arrival at the chateau.

Paring down the novel's rather thick-eared theological subtext (provided by an ongoing discussion on faith between Wont and 'Father' Mundy). Gordon chooses to highlight the unit's desperate attempt to maintain familial security. With a 'mother' and 'father' in tow, the remaining four men are portrayed very much as innocent children, brimming with intelligence and utterly bewildered by the behaviour of the adults around them. This lends an added poignancy to the film's climactic announcement that the surviving quartet were never reunited (Gordon's only departure from the book). Not only does the war not provide a buddy-bonding exercise, it irrevocably shatters any semblance of domestic unity. Juxtaposing humorous set pieces (Miller's practice struts as an officer, echoing Donald Sutherland's promotion in The Dirty Dozen) with some extremely moving sequences, A Midnight Clear builds up considerable emotive momentum and admirably succeeds in ringing a fresh variation on the 'war-ishell' philosophy.

Farrah Anwar



Jeepers creepers:

Night of the Living Dead

USA 1990

Director: Tom Savini

Certificate Not yet issued Distributor Blue Dolphin **Production Company** 21st Century Productions **Executive Producers** George A. Romero Menahem Golan Co-executive Producer Ami Artzi Producers John A. Russo Russell Streiner Line Producer Declan Baldwin Associate Producer Christine Romero **Production Supervisor** Donna Solomon

Donna Solomon
Production Co-ordinator
Janice F. Sperling
Unit Production Manager
Marc S. Fischer
Location Supervisor
Scott Hornbacher
Post-production
Supervisor

Mark S. Hoerr

Casting

Meredith Jacobson

Donna Belajac

Assistant Directors

Nick Mastandrea

Margie Sperling

Screenplay
George A. Romero
Based on the
screenplay Night of the
Living Dead by John
A. Russo, George
A. Romero

Director of Photography
Frank Prinzi
Colour
TVC
Camera Operator

Editor
Tom Dubensky
Production Designer
Cletus R. Anderson
Art Director

James Feng
Set Decorator
Brian J. Stonestreet
Set Dressers
Ralph R. Pivirotto
Megan Graham
Scenic Artists
Richard S. Sheridan

Vincent Borrelli
Head:
Kathryn A. Borland
Storyboard Artist
Brad Hunter
Pyrotechnic Special Effects

Music
Paul McCollough
Music Arrangements
Chris Pangikas
Costume Design

Matt Vogel

Wardrobe Supervisor
Nancy A. Palmatier
Make-up
Jeanne Josefczyk

Special Make-up Effects
John Vulich
Everett Burrell
Titles/Opticals

Titles/Opticals Cinema Research Corporation Supervising Sound Editor

Thomas Pettinato **Sound Editors** Marva Fucci Richard Burton Stewart Nelsen Fred Wasser Sound Recordist Felipe Borrero ADR/Foley Recordists Neil Lambert Preston Oliver Ultra stereo Sound Re-recordists Pat Cyccone Frank Montano ADR/Foley: Tommy Goodwin Foley Artists Jim Chilton Joseph Sabella Stunt Co-ordinator Phil Nielson Stunts Michael C. Russo Greg Smerz

Tony Washington

Mick O'Rourke

Donald Hewitt Cast Tony Todd Patricia Tallman Barbara Tom Towles Harry McKee Anderson Helen William Butler Kate Finneran Judy Rose Bill Mosley Johnnie Heather Mazur Sarah **David Butler** Hondo Zachary Mott Bulldog Pat Reese Mourner William Cameron Newsman Pat Logan Uncle Rege Berle Ellis Flaming Zombie Bill "Chilly Billy" Cardille TV Interviewer Greg Funk Cemetery Zombie **Tim Carrier** Autopsy Zombie John Hamilton Crowbar Zombie Dyrk Ashton Truck Zombie **Jordan Berlant** Porch Zombie **Albert Shellhammer** Cousin Satchel Jay McDowell Front Door Zombie Walter Berry McGruder **Kendal Kraft** Bob Evans Zombie **David Grace** Policeman Zombie Stacie Foster Doll's Mom Zombie Charles Crawley Window Zombie

> 8,640 feet 96 minutes

Rural Pennsylvania. When Barbara and her brother Johnnie visit their mother's grave in an isolated cemetery they are attacked by zom-



Mommie dearest: Stacie Foster

Barbara to a farmhouse. The dead, who hunger for human flesh, can only be destroyed by a shot in the brain. Barbara is joined by Ben, a black man. They find guns in the house and discover other survivors in the basement: Harry and Helen Cooper, their injured daughter Sarah and a young couple, Tom and Judy Rose. Harry, who thinks their best chance of survival lies in hiding in the cellar, and Ben, who wants to fortify the house, argue but everyone co-operates in commandeering a truck. The escape attempt fails when Tom tries to unlock a petrol pump with a shotgun blast, thereby causing an explosion in which he and Judy are burned to death.

At the house, Helen is killed by Sarah, who has turned into a zombie. Harry steals Barbara's gun, and when Ben tries to destroy Sarah, the men have a shoot-out in which both are wounded. Barbara goes for help and the zombies overwhelm the house, driving Harry into the attic and Ben into the cellar. Barbara joins up with a crowd hunting down the zombies for sport, and returns to the farmhouse just as posse members are breaking through into the cellar to shoot the zombie Ben. Harry, still alive, comes down from the attic and Barbara murders him. The posse gather up the twice-dead corpses and make a bonfire.

George A. Romero's seminal horror film has already inspired two official sequels, sundry parodies and too many imitations to cite. With all this attention, the 1968 film was hardly in need of a colour remake; this enterprise was embarked on partly because a rights quirk meant that if the original production team did not undertake a remake, then anyone else could do so.

That said, this is as good a job as one has the right to expect, compressing the major plot points of the original into its first four-fifths and then coming up with disturbing new twists, vaguely inspired by Straw Dogs, capping Barbara's statement about the zombies - "We are them and they are us" - with her startling murder of Harry. Most cannily, Romero and Savini do not reproduce well-remembered shocks, playing a major trick on Living Dead fans as the shambling bum in the first

■ bies, who kill Johnnie and pursue | scene (an unforgettable monster in) 1968) turns out to be a red herring, a precursor of the unexpected appearance of the first attacking zombie.

> Revising the original screenplay he wrote with John Russo, Romero shears away much of the 'scientific' explanation, 60s social satire and commentary on the media reaction to the crisis, concentrating instead on the divisions in the small group of survivors. Occasionally further ironies - like the suggestion that the horde of flesh-eaters outside the farmhouse has not been attracted by the scent of living meat, but by the sound of carpentry as the besieged fortify the place – are layered in. Ben and his bigoted adversary Harry remain essentially as they were, to the point of appearing anachronistic. They gain in stature from the neariconic cachet of Tony Todd (Candyman) and Tom Towles (Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer), who model their performances, down to the smallest tics, on Duane Jones and Karl Hardman in the original. The major character alteration is Patricia Tallman's Barbara, given a post-Sigourney Weaver spin when her traumatised reaction to her brother's death is not to become catatonic but to turn into a guerrilla fighter. As in Alien, the presence of a strong female survivor requires the secondary female, Judy, to be a panicky whiner who rushes stupidly to her own death. It is ironic that the 1990 Barbara's anti-zombie violence is seen to be as insane as her 1968 predecessor's retreat into a psychological shell.

> Tom Savini, in a directorial debut which follows a few episodes of Tales from the Darkside and various unofficial second-unit chores, intelligently refrains from going overboard on gore gags. With resources unavailable to the original - an original score rather than stock music, convincing make-up, consistent lighting, professional actors he manages to bring up to standard the sometimes ropey qualities of the first film. However, this movie does contain a few too many hand-throughthe-window shock tricks and suffers by comparison with the original. Romero's Night of the Living Dead was so much of its time, yet such an important and influential gift to posterity that any remake is doomed to be a footnote.

Kim Newman

One False Move

USA 1992

Director: Carl Franklin

Certificate Distributor Metro Pictures **Production Company** I.R.S Media International **Executive Producers** Miles A. Copeland III Paul Colichman Harold Welb **Producers** Jesse Beaton Ben Myron **Executives in Charge of** Production Toni Phillips Steven Reich **Production Executives** Kevin Reidy Melissa Cobb Line Producer Tony To **Production Controller** Rachel Villa **Production Co-ordinators** John P. Melfi 2nd Unit: Rachel Villa 2nd Unit Production Manager Michael Cain **Location Managers** Michael Cain William Buck Post-production Supervisor Graham Stumpf Casting Don Pemrick **Assistant Directors** Michael Grossman Tony Schwartz Jim Wiggins 2nd Unit: John Vohlers Screenplay Billy Bob Thornton Tom Epperson **Director of Photography** James L. Carter In colour 2nd Unit Director of Photography Janesz Kaminsky "B" Camera Operator Paul Edwards **Steadicam Operator** John Neuler 24 Frame Video Van Scarboro Editor Carole Kravetz **Production Designer** Gary T. New **Art Director** Dana Torrey **Set Decorator** Troy Myers **Set Dresser** Julie Crane Storyboard Artist Ray Prado **Special Effects** Co-ordinator Guy Faria Music Peter Haycock Derek Holt

Music performed by

Guitar Soloists:

Pete Haycock

Eric Gale

Flute Solist:

Patricia Cloud

Terry Plumeri

Harmonicas:

Charles Meeks

Pete Haycock

Luis Perez

Brad Dutz

Orchestrations

Terry Plumeri

Music Supervisor

Paul Di Franco

Percussionists:

Acoustic Bass Soloist:

Consultant Seth Willenson **Stunt Co-ordinator Tierre Turner** Bill Paxton Dale "Hurricane" Dixon Cynda Williams Fantasia/Lila **Billy Bob Thornton** Ray Malcolm Michael Beach Pluto Jim Metzler Dud Cole **Earl Billings** McFeely **Natalie Canerday** Cheryl Ann **Robert Ginnaven** Charlie **Robert Anthony Bell** Byron **Kevin Hunter** Ronnie Phyllis Kirklin Mrs Walker Bonnie James D. Bridges Bobby Phyllis Sutton Jackie **Derrick Williams** Darren **June Jones** Danielle **Loren Tyler** Marco Deniese Payne

Don Brunner Press Officer **Music Editor Layne Beamer** Frank McKelvey Texas State Trooper **Mea Combs** Songs "Don't Walk Away Cashier From Love" by Michael Jesse Dabson Sutton, Brenda Sutton, Beaver performed by Brenda Jennifer Hunt Watson Sutton; "Show You Kim **Rocky Giordani** Right" by and performed by Michael Billy "The Face" Sutton II; "Jesus Is

John Mahon

Chief Jenkins

J. Robert Bailey

Assistant Chief

Duncan Rouleau

Video Analyst

Lieutenant

Max Segar

Leading Me" by Michael Sutton, Brenda Sutton, performed by Reverend Julian Turner; "Rock Me With Your Love" by Odette Springer, Matt Ender; "I Can't Stop Cryin'" by Deborah Holland **Costume Design** Ron Leamon Wardrobe

Henry Earl Lewis Make-up Artists Elaine Offers Jason Gade Titles/Opticals Title House **Supervising Sound Editor**

David Lewis Yewdall Sound Editors Stacey A. Foiles Paul Jyrala Christopher J. Lewis Dialogue:

Steve Rice **ADR Editor** Barbara J. Boguski **Sound Recordists** Ken Segal Larry Hoki

Sound Re-recordists Supervisor: Jeffrey Perkins Bruce Stambler **Foley Artists** Vanessa Ament Heather McPherson

Jeff Cadiente Stunts Alton Jones Danny Weselis Kim Washington

Meredith "Jeta" Donovar

Marco's Wife

Curtis York Jeremiah Jeff Bailey Harlan Childress Lilli Rouleau Mrs Childress **Walter Norman** Arkansas State Trooper Rebecca Ortese Fern **Jackie Stewart** Truck Driver **Leslie Mauldin** Driver's Wife Steven Reich Car Salesman Leo Tillman June Hawkins

9,487 feet

105 minutes

South Central LA. A young black man is shooting a video at his birthday party when a friend, Fantasia, lets in her white boyfriend Ray and his black partner Pluto, who beat up the guests to discover the whereabouts of Marco, a local drug dealer. Ray and Fantasia then visit Marco and get him to reveal his stash of cocaine and money; while Ray strangles the witnesses, Pluto stabs the partygoers. Ray asks Fantasia to look for Marco's child; she finds him but decides to say nothing. Detectives Cole and McFeely identify the gang and get a possible destination from Fantasia's voice on the party video - Star City, Alabama, where Ray has an uncle. Local police chief Dale Hawkins is contacted, and he confirms that the uncle's house is a likely hide-

on a big case. Pluto insists that the gang head for Huston to sell to his drug connection, Billy. He sees his and Ray's pictures in a newspaper and they switch cars. In a roadside store, Ray and Fantasia meet a suspicious traffic cop who follows their car and pulls them over, but Fantasia shoots him.

out. Cole and McFeely fly down south

and accompany Hawkins as he visits

Ray's uncle. That night Hawkins' wife

tells Cole how excited Dale is to be in

Hawkins overhears Cole and McFeely mocking his ambitions, but stifles his pride to tell them about the shooting. When a picture taken from a store video camera arrives, he recogises Fantasia as local girl Lila Walker. They visit Lila's mother, brother and fiveyear-old son. McFeely suspects that there was once something between Hawkins and Lila.

In Huston, the gang have to wait a day for Billy. Lila suggests that she go ahead to Arkansas. Her brother meets her outside town to warn her off, but she insists on seeing her child. They arrange to meet later at an empty house. When Billy returns to Huston, he tries to back out of the deal, and Ray and Pluto shoot him and his cohorts. Pluto wants to split the money but Ray discovers that Lila has taken most of it. Lila's brother sneaks her son out to the car at night, but Hawkins follows. The following morning, Hawkins confronts Lila; it turns out that he is the father of her child. Cole and McFeely visit the Walkers and ask the child to retrace the route to his mother. As Ray and Pluto arrive at Lila's hideout, she waves them in to where Hawkins is waiting. He wounds Ray, is stabbed by and shoots Pluto, and is himself wounded outside. Ray shoots Lila through the head and Hawkins guns Ray down. The detectives arrive with the boy and, as Hawkins lies bleeding, he talks to his son for the first time.

The route from LA to the dusty roads of Arkansas reverses the direction of the great black migration from the rural South to the industrial cities of the North and West. In the Afro-American imagination, this journey is still a metaphor for going home. Whether or not this metaphor was pertinent to scriptwriters Billy Bob Thornton and Tom Epperson, in black director Carl Franklin's hands, One False Move is set on tracing American race conflict back to its seed bed in the South.

A hybrid of a road movie and a High Noon-style portrait of a fragile would-be hero, the film transcends the usual low-budget thriller concerns via an intricate script which emphasises the racial theme through a number of black/white relationships: the mixed race Fantasia/Lila and her two white lovers Ray and Dale, Ray's partnership in crime with Pluto, and the LA cop team of Cole and McFeely.

It's unusual enough to find these concerns in a genre thriller, but their use in one modelled on the hard-boiled fiction of writers like Jim Thompson and Charles Williams borders on the audacious. Recent films in the genre by Dennis Hopper (The Hot Spot) and James Foley (After Dark My Sweet) emphasised sickly humour at the expense of the fiction's characteristically overheated psychodrama. Truer to the genre's icy characterisations, the cocaine paranoid Ray and the impassive Pluto, with his IQ of 180 and his pleasure in using a knife, make a suitably Thompsonian pair. Franklin's interest in the road movie element lies more in teasing out the tensions that a plausible interracial gang would signify than in playing his heavies for grim laughs.

While Ray and Pluto argue about what to do, Fantasia is the film's quiet agent of change and discovery - not for herself (it is she who is literally returning to an identity she cannot escape) but for her son and his white father. Her adopted name, coupled with her apparent passivity, might lead one to suspect she is merely a projection of white male fantasy, but her actions belie this. She saves the dealer's child. shoots the traffic cop, and steals the money for her son - virtually all the decisive moves undertaken on the road. Nevertheless her dreamy, listless persona and her active duplicity still fit her for the role of femme fatale, and it is on her image that the whole film

turns. What distinguishes her from a noir archetype is that she is given psychological cause for her enigmatic behaviour.

Before the arrival of Fantasia's photo - the moment when she 'becomes' Lila - Dale Hawkins is an excitable child-like good ol' boy in awe of the big city cops. As his wife tartly says while apologising to Cole for his use of the word "nigger" in front of black cop McFeely, "Dale watches TV, I read nonfiction." His bravado is just part of his Southern Cowboy charm, as casually employed as it presumably was in bedding Lila. But on seeing her picture straight after suffering his colleagues' ridicule, the reality of a personal connection arrives with too abrupt a force. The transformation from buffoon to tragic figure (from adolescent to man) is more than actor Bill Paxton can handle, and it surely should have been managed by degrees.

In turning the film so radically on one moment, Franklin may have robbed himself of a plausible psychology for Hawkins, but he has an alternative protagonist, beautifully played by Cynda Williams (Mo' Better Blues), and all along he invests more in Fantasia/Lila's subtextual sacrificial journey than the one Hawkins makes from his daughter's cradle to his son's side.

Nick James



Oxen (The Ox)

Sweden 1992

Director: Sven Nykvist

Certificate
12
Distributor
Artificial Eye
Production Company
Sweetland Films
In association with
Sandrews/Swedish Film
Institute/Swedish
Television/Channel 1/
Nordisk Film
Production AS/Nordic
Film & Television Fund
Producer
Jean Doumanian
Line Producer

Jean Doumanian
Line Producer
Joseph Stillman
Production Manager
Lars Blomgren
Screenplay
Sven Nykvist
Lasse Summanen
Director of Photography

Director of Photograph
Dan Myhrman
Editor
Lasse Summanen
Art Director

Peter Hoimark

Set Decorator

Magnus Magnusson

Music Extracts

"Solveig's Song" "Th

"Solveig's Song", "The Missing Ox*, "Death of Aase", "Svenning's Visit", "In the Cradle". "Discovered", "Melody, Op.63 2", "Prelude, Op.40, 1" by Edvard Grieg; "Hymnal"; "Wir glauben all" by J.S. Bach; "Prayer at the Table": "Navvies' Song": "Market Accordion": "Navvies' Lullaby": "Country Dance": "Sonata 1975" by Lubos Fisor

Music Supervisor
Thomas S. Drescher
Costume Design
Inger Pehrsson
Make-up
Kaj Gronberg
Sound Recordist

Bo Persson

Cast
Stellan Skarsgard
Heige
Ewa Froling
Elfrida
Lennart Hjulstrom
Svenning
Max Von Sydow
The Pastor
Liv Ullman
Maria
Bjorn Granath
Flyckt
Erland Josephson
Silver

Erland Josephson
Silver
Rikard Wolff
Johannes
Helge Jordal
Navvy
Agneta Prytz
The Old Woman
Bjorn Gustafson
Officer in Command
Jaqui Safra

8,299 feet 92 minutes

Shop Owner

Subtitles

Rural Sweden, Christmas 1868. Frantic at the hungry cries of his baby daughter Anna, Helge Roos slaughters an ox belonging to his employer, Svenning Gustavsson. His wife Elfrida is horrified, but Helge tells her the meat will allow them to survive the harsh winter. The disappearance of the ox hampers farm work, but apart from Flyckt, a drunken poacher with designs on Elfrida, no one suspects Helge of being responsible.

When only the ox's hide is left, Helge takes it to sell at Jönköping market. En route he meets the Pastor, and wracked with guilt, confesses his crime. The Pastor escorts him to court, assuring him he will be dealt with leniently, but instead Helge is sentenced to be flogged and imprisoned for life. Elfrida and her daughter are left destitute. She repels Flyckt's advances, but later in desperation accepts food from a railway worker in return for sex. From this liaison she bears a son. Meanwhile Helge, in jail, is persecuted by his fellow-prisoners who take him for a stool-pigeon. A further torment is the arrival of Flyckt, jailed for sexual offences, who boasts of having been Elfrida's lover.

◄ The Pastor, pressing to have Helge's sentence reduced, organises a petition which everyone signs except the implacable Gustavsson. Only after five years is he induced to relent, and Helge is set free. He comes home to a passionate reunion with Elfrida, but on seeing her bastard son leaves again in fury, planning to emigrate to America. The Pastor persuades him that he should forgive his wife since she, like Helge himself, acted out of desperation for the sake of their daughter. Helge returns to Elfrida and is reconciled.

Sven Nykvist's first film as solo director takes on unfashionable concerns: marital fidelity, social duty, sin and expiation. Though Nykvist predictably names Ingmar Bergman (whose regular cinematographer he was from 1960 onwards) as chief influence on his style of film-making, the moral universe of his film has little in common with that of his mentor. The near-feudal world he portrays may be bleak and harsh, but there's none of Bergman's tormented vision of humankind shouting its questions at an empty heaven. In The Ox, moral ambiguity scarcely figures: right and wrong are as clearly demarcated as the congregation in the local church, where the aisle segregates women from men.

So even though Helge kills the ox for the most excusable of reasons - to feed his starving child - he doesn't dissent from Elfrida's verdict that "We've sinned before God, we've broken the law and we've wronged Svenning, the man we work for". As they dismember the carcass, distant church-bells sound as if in reproach. Guilt-ridden, Helge readily accepts retribution: the injustice is not that he's punished, but that the punishment is disproportionate to his crime. Through his suffering, he atones for his sin - during his flogging there's a brief cut to the head of the felled ox, linking his agony with that of the animal - and in forgiving Elfrida, shows himself worthy of the forgiveness he's been granted.

What saves the film, for all its Old Testament moral framework, from turning into a conventional exercise in

Nordic gloom is its celebration of the resilience of human emotion. The love between Helge and Elfrida is strengthened by adversity to the point where not even the revelation of her infidelity can destroy it, and the impersonal severity of the law - the judge who passes sentence features only as a grim off-screen presence, never seen can be worn down by the persistence of mercy. Even the stern absolutes of religion prove flexible: von Sydow's Pastor is a far less troubled and more compassionate figure than any Bergman clergyman (both Bergman and Nykvist, it's worth noting, are the sons of Lutheran pastors).

Where The Ox does recall Nykvist's work with Bergman is in its visual treatment - again, hardly surprising, since the two men worked so closely together that it is often hard to tell who was influencing whom. Acting as his own director of photography, and shooting interiors and exteriors alike on real locations, Nykvist puts natural (or natural-seeming) light to iconographic use. Early scenes in the couple's hut are keyed in dark reds and browns, suggesting the warmth of their relationship despite poverty. After their separation the tones darken to heavy greys and blacks, while the prison quarry - a precipitous, perpetually frozen slope, like the lowest circle of Dante's Inferno - is grey on grey. utter desolation. And as Helge is freed the film also emerges from darkness, with a joyous sense of release, into the luminous fresh green of a spring landscape.

In keeping with the tenor of his story, Nykvist frames his images with archetypal simplicity, setting them against the yearning clarity of Grieg's music. Only the very last shot introduces a hint of ambiguity. We see the embrace of reconciliation, not directly but reflected in a window through which the two children are peering, their faces puzzled and faintly apprehensive. A voice-over tells us, with quiet irony, that the couple had eight children and that "all behaved very well".

Philip Kemp



Bovine retribution: Ewa Froling, Stellan Skarsgard

Paris Is Burning

USA 1990

Director: Jennie Livingston

Certificate
Not yet issued
Distributor
ICA

Production Company Off White Productions With financial assistance from National Endowment for the Arts/Jerome Foundation/New York State Council on the Arts/New York Foundation for the Arts/Paul Robeson Fund/Edelman Fund/ Art Matters Inc/ **BBC** Television **Executive Producers** Davis Lacy

Nigel Finch

Producer
Jennie Livingston

Co-producer
Barry Swimar

Associate Producers

Claire Goodman

Meg McLagan

Additional;

Production Co-ordinator
Elise Pettus
Production Manager
Natalie Hill
Director of Photography

In colour

Camera Operators

2nd Unit:
Mayrse Alberti
Additional:
William Megalos
Frank Prinzi
Alyson Denny

Paul Gibson

Ben Speth Graphic Design Jim Rogula Anne Dutlinger Editors

Jonathan Oppenheim
Additional:
Kate Davis
Associate Editor
Carol Hillson

Music Extract
"Triumphal March"
by Giuseppe Verdi,
performed by
H. J. Walther and the
Festival Symphony
Orchestra

"Silent Morning" by and performed by Noel Pagan: "Who's Zoomin' Who" by Narada Michael Walden. performed by Aretha Franklin; "Love is the Message" by Kenneth Gamble, Leon Huff, performed by MFSB; "Love Hangover" by Pam Sawyer, Marilyn McLeod, performed by Diana Ross; "Move Your Body" by and performed by Marshall Jefferson; "Let No Man Put Asunder" by Bruce Gray, Bruce Hawes, performed by First Choice: "Got To Be Real" by David Foster, Cheryl Lynn, David Paich, performed by Cheryl Lynn; "The Show" by R. Walters, D. Davis, performed by Doug E. Fresh and The Get Fresh Crew: "Love's Theme" by and performed by Barry White; "Sundance" by and performed by Kitaro; "Never Never Gonna Give You Up" by Barry White,

David A. Stewart. performed by Eurythmics: "Is It All Over My Face?" by Arthur Russell, Steve D'Aquisto, performed by Loose Joints; "I'll House You" by P. Hall, M. Smalls, S. Burwell, performed by Jungle Brothers; "I Am What I Am" by Jerry Herman, performed by Carmen and Brooke; "Deep in Vogue" by Malcolm McLaren, David Lebolt, performed by Malcolm McLaren and the Bootzilla Orchestra: "Another Man is Beating My Time" by Butch Ingram. performed by Barbara Mason: "Over the Rainbow" by E. Y. Harburg, H. Arlen, performed by Patti LaBelle Titles Borden Elniff **Opticals** Eastern Optical EFX inc Cynosure Sound Editor Stacia Thompson **Sound Recordists** Catherine Calderon Judy Karp Additional: Etienne Sauret George Leong J.T. Takagi Scott Breindel Stanley Nelson James Adner Mayrse Alberti Jennie Livingston Sound Re-recordists Matt Skilton Rick Dior **Sound Transfers**

performed by Love

(Are Made of This)"

by Annie Lennox.

"Sweet Dreams

Unlimited Orchestra:

Carmen and Brooke **Andre Christian Dorian Corey** Paris Dupree Pepper Labelja Junior Labelja Willi Ninja Sandy Ninja Kim Pendavis Freddie Pendavis Sol Pendavis **Avis Pendavis** Octavia Saint Laurent Stevie Saint Laurent Angie Xtravaganza Bianca Xtravaganza Danny Xtravaganza David Xtravaganza David lan Xtravaganza David, The Father Xtravaganza Venus Xtravaganza And all of the legendary children and upcoming legends

Sound One

7,020 feet 78 minutes

New York, 1987. On a hot summer's night, two teenage boys stand outside a small Harlem community hall, watching young men bustle inside. It's ball night and the men - all gay blacks - are preparing to 'walk the ball' in the hope of winning a trophy. Like the regular beauty contests that these drag balls are modelled on, this is a fiercely competitive affair. The contestants are all members of 'Houses', small gay gangs with names like Ninja, Xtravaganza, Labeija and Pendavis. The house members ('children') complete for the glory of their house, entering or 'walking' in categories that range from the traditional - evening wear, sports wear and town and country - to the more idiosyncratic - Butch Queen First Time In Drag, Wall Street Executive, Bangee (neighborhood thug/drug dealer) Boy. Striking catwalk poses in 'voguing', they strive for 'realness' that is, the quality of passing for something they're not.

We move from the ball to the apartments of veteran voguers Dorian Corey, Pepper Labeija and Angie Xtravaganza, who provide a history of the ball scene. Younger members like Venus Xtravaganza, Octavia Saint Laurent, Kim Pendavis, Carmen and Brooke provide insights into further categories of realness, and talk about their lives and their hopes for the future. Venus, a petit(e) blonde halfway through a sex change, longs for a husband, children and enough money to remove the "little secret" between his/her legs. Octavia is observed window-shopping at haute couture stores. Willi Ninja, a champion vogue dancer, is seen giving deportment lessons to (real) girls. 1989: the voguing scene has come overground; white, moneyed visitors from the real fashion world drop in on a benefit ball. The two teenage boys, whom we now know to be lovers, bid us goodbye. A postscript reveals that Venus was murdered soon after filming ended.

When Jennie Livingston's documentary about Harlem's gay ball scene opened as a 58-minute video at New York's New Festival of Gay and Lesbian Film in 1990, it was instantly recognised as a masterpiece of underworld reportage. And not just within the gay culture. Bounced up from 16mm form, with added credits, a flash-card guide to the ball vocabulary and a killer soundtrack of disco hits, the film scooped the kind of awards that its voguing heroes would die for. At New York's Film Forum, it ran for a record-breaking 17 weeks in 1991. In Britain too, where a truncated version was screened on BBC TV's Arena in 1990, it provoked strong reactions and high ratings.

This is a satisfying success. The release of Livingston's film was roughly contemporary with the discovery of the underground ball scene by the pop world, as commemorated on records like Madonna's 'Vogue' and Malcolm McLaren's 'Deep In Vogue'. Although the latter actually used ball world personnel – Willi Ninja featured in



Luscious bodies: Dorian Corey, Pepper Lebeija

McLaren's video and was flown all over the world to promote the record – it was obvious that both stars were only temporary sojourners on a souvenir hunt. Livingston makes it quite clear that the world of *Paris* is one filled with complex messages that require a more careful analysis than pop appropriation can provide.

The business of decoding these messages and locating the issues at play makes for the film's enduring fascination. If this were just another film about cross-dressing men, it would at best be camp, at worst a piece of material for trainee psychiatrists. But it's not. With their houses and their language, the ball queens have responded to economic and social exclusion by creating a community that's fabulous in every sense of the word. In real terms, the ball queens have so much of nothing it defies imagination. Their life stories are a litany of poverty, parental rejection, homelessness. One queen dreams of looking "as well as a white person", others want to be women, a few want to be mothers and live in the country. Once you accept that their commonality lies in the refuge of fantasy, then anything goes. "O-P-U-L-E-N-C-E!" sings out one ball queen. "You own everything! Everything is yours!"

And indeed, much of what these self-scripted starlets say is immensely funny. Their specialised vocabulary (which would put Wayne's World to shame) commands special attention. Kim Pendavis explains 'mopping' (stealing a dress); Willi is an expert in 'reading' and 'throwing shade' on the dance floor - that is, copying someone's moves and criticising them. All the 'children' long to be 'legendary' and all strive for the elusive quality of 'realness'. Realness certainly has to do with passing oneself off as the perfect mannequin, in the guise of executive, playboy or hoodlum; but not far beneath its surface lies a combination of mockery and the desire for

acceptance by affluent society. Most importantly, realness is about survival in a homophobic world. "When [a queen] can go out in sunlight, still have her clothes on and get home with no blood, then that femme queen is real".

Livingston's method of weaving the ball, street and interview footage into a coherent and flowing whole is audaciously simple. Some 20 phrases flashed up on screen - Bangee! Luscious Body! Pig Latin! - announce the film's editorial structure. Each phrase is defined, elaborated and activated in ensuing shots. The careful segues between sections establish a fluid momentum in which very little intervention is necessary; Livingston never appears as interlocutor although her presence is very much felt through her choice of material. Livingston, on record as a lesbian of German Jewish extraction, finds in the ball scene men marginalised through race and sexuality. Her implicit message - one which should be heard by us all - is that the benefits of community are underlined by its role as protection against outside threats. Short of the ritualised combats of the ball-walking scenes, violence is off-screen, out there and completely real. The ball queens inhabit a dangerous world.

If the wit, glamour and mind-boggling outfits of Paris Is Burning are disarming, not far beneath the film's surface is an immensely moving quality. Watching the sublimely elegant Willi teaching a class of slouchy (real) girls a feminine deportment is hilarious, but the outside world intrudes in a more insidious way. Venus' death (presumably at the hands of a client who discovered her secret) is bad enough; but realising that no amount of ballroom realness can get these voguing 'executives' off the Harlem catwalks and onto Wall Street itself is quietly heart-breaking.

Louise Gray

Romper Stomper

Australia 1992

Director: Geoffrey Wright

Certificate Star

18 Ru

Distributor Brown

Medusa Pictures Last

Production Company Szzz

Romper Stomper Groppoduction for De Seon Films John

Seon Films
In association with
The Australian Film
Commission
Producers

Daniel Scharf

Associate Producer
Phil Jones
Production Co-ordinator
Fiona Eagger
Production Manager

Elisa Argenzio

Location Unit Manager

Stephen Brett

Casting

Liz Mullinar

Consultants
Greg Apps
Assistant Directors
Chris Odgers

Monica Pearce
Andrew Power
Screenplay
Geoffrey Wright
Director of Photography

Ron Hagen

Colour

Eastman Color

Opticals

Colin Tyler

Editor

Bill Murphy

Production Designer

Steven Jones-Evans

Set Decorators
Lisa Thompson
Colin Robertson
Special Effects

Special Effects
Film Trix
Peter Stubbs
Jeff Little

John Clifford White

Music Extract

"Au Fond du Temple
Saint" from "Les
Pêcheurs de perles"
by Georges Bizet,
performed by Ernest
Blanc, Nicolai Gedda,
Orchestre du Théâtre
National de l'Opéra

Comique Music performed by Vocals:

John Clifford White Guitar: John Hewitt Bass Guitar: Chris Pettifer Drums: Phillip Beard German Vocals:

Peter Pales
Orchestrations
John Hawker
Music Editor
Peter Palanky
Costume Designer

Anna Borghesi
Make-up Artists
Christine Miller
Sue Kelly Tait
Title Design
Oliver Streeton

Sound Design Frank Lipson Sound Editors Steve Burgess Roger Savage

ADR Editor
Peter Burgess
Sound Recordist
David Lee
Dolby stereo consultant:
Stephen Murphy

Sound Transfers
Eugene Wilson
Foley
Steve Burgess
Gerry Long

Gerry Long
Stunt Co-ordinator
Chris Peters

Russell Allen
Brett Anderson
Lance Anderson
Szumai Anderson
Graham Collis
Dean Gould
John Raaen
Anthea Roordink
Reg Roordink
Steve Roper

Ron Sheepers Cast **Russell Crowe** Hando **Daniel Pollock** Davey Jacqueline McKenzie Gabe Alex Scott Martin Leigh Russell Sonny Jim **Daniel Wyllie** Cackles James McKenna Bubs Eric Mueck Champ Frank Magree Brett Christopher McLean Luke

Luke
Josephine Keen
Megan
Samantha Bladon
Tracy
Tony Lee
Tiger
John Brumpton
Magoo

Magoo
Don Bridges
Harold
Janei Anderson
Jacqui
Stephen Hall
Fieo
Tri Phan

Nguyen
Thuan Le
Nguyen's Eldest Son
Minh Lu
Middle Son
Thach Le
Youngest Son
Craig Mercer

Angus Cummings
Rob
Yvonne Lawrence
Davey's Grandmother
Edwina Exton
Skinhead Girl
David Tredinnick
Gabe's Boyfriend

Steve Millichamp
Pommy Bill
William K. Halliwell
Derro
Vu Le
Tiger's Mate
Vu Nguyen
Francy
Paul Nguyen
Long
Thanh Trinh
Vinh
Vy Nguyen

Ann Morell
Barmaid
Neil Foley
Skinhead in Plaster
Nigel Baptist
Strangled Man
Jenny Lin

John Raaen
Plain Clothes Policeman
Anthea Roordink
Policewoman
Russell Frost
Vounce Policeman

Young Policeman Keiko Clarke Ria Yazaki Girls on Cliff Top

8,324 feet 91 minutes Three Vietnamese teenagers are viciously assaulted by racist skinhead thugs led by Hando and his right-hand man Davey. Gabe, a young woman who's just broken up with her latest boyfriend, comes across the gang and tags along with Hando, who steals a jacket for her from a shop window. Back at their rundown hideout she has sex with him in a bedroom adorned with Nazi regalia.

The next day sees the arrival of Magoo, a skinhead from Canberra, who sells Davey a Hitler Youth issue knife and celebrates the occasion with a slam-dancing party. Hando explains his theories on racial supremacy to Gabe, quoting Mein Kampf and putting the words into action by attacking the Vietnamese family who've bought the local pub. The Asian community swiftly rallies to the family's aid, starting a bloody running battle through the streets and tracking the skinheads back to their hideout, which they destroy. Hando, Davey, Gabe and the others escape via the roof, repairing to an abandoned warehouse to plot their revenge. Gabe leads them to the house of her rich film director father, where they can round up stolen goods and she can humiliate her father after years of incest. But her father scares the gang off with a handgun, and Gabe accuses Hando of being a loser. She storms out, followed by Davey, with whom she's been forming an emotional bond. Informing the police, who raid the warehouse and arrest most of the gang, she later joins Davey at his German grandmother's house, where they make love.

The next morning, Hando appears with news of the police bust, maintaining that the three of them should stick together. Later, after he has strangled an Asian shop assistant during a robbery, they drive west in a stolen car, ending up on a beach where the tensions between them finally erupt. Overhearing Hando encouraging his pal to leave her behind, Gabe sets the getaway car alight and as the two men tussle, Davey fatally stabs Hando with the Hitler Youth knife. Davey and Gabe remain together in an embrace.

critic Geoffrey film Former Wright's debut feature has already garnered both brickbats and acclaim on home ground and on the festival circuit, splitting opinion between those who admire the courage of the film's head-on approach to a tough subject, and others who find the apparent lack of moral judgement quite irresponsible. Closer scrutiny, however, reveals a welter of thematic and stylistic incoherence that virtually precludes a cut and-dried response in one direction or the other. In fact, Romper Stomper is neither a morally blank analysis of far right misdemeanours, nor a wholly traditional and liberally balanced social problem picture, and that is precisely what makes it so problematic.

Certainly no model of distanced neutrality, Wright's film clearly ▶



These boots weren't made for walking: Russell Crowe (centre)

expounds the notion, for instance. that the skinheads' ideological stance is a direct response from a white youth underclass to the burgeoning economic sway of the Vietnamese immigrant community. Hando plainly affirms that he doesn't want to be "a white coolie in my own country" or go "the same way as the fucking Abbo". before turning to the notion of "racial blood poisoning" in the pages of Mein Kampf. A slam-dancing party sequence, where Wright intercuts from the mayhem on the floor to Hando and Gabe having rough sex and again to Davey pummelling a punchbag, serves to underline the thesis that the gang's violent behaviour is, in part, a pleasurable outlet for physical frustrations, while Davy's use of a Hitler Youth issue knife to fatally dispatch Hando in the final reel is an obvious injection of symbolism to ram home the notion that violence breeds only more violence.

On paper at least, all of this seems reasonable enough, but in his treatment of the character details, Wright veers uncomfortably from such sober analysis towards a sympathetic understanding, and in so doing comes close (unintentionally?) to endorsing the gang's aberrant activity. In the scene where Gabe turns the tables on her incestuous father by tying him up while the gang ransacks his place, it's impossible not to root for her and to feel that the violence she's picked up on from the gang has helped to liberate her from her psychological shadows. Conveniently wheeling on a German grandmother and an absent father for Davey, Wright seems to propose that we consider his and Gabe's record of destruction in the light of such mitigating circumstances; and although he never indicates the degree to which this should excuse them, the fact that their capacity for love and affection sees them finally spared to face an uncertain future obviously points to the way we should marshal our sympathies.

In the case of resolute fascist zealot Hando, on the other hand, we are given far less background information on which to base a similar judgement. We learn that he's concerned about the Vietnamese gaining the ascendancy in the local area of Melbourne, but for

the most part Russell Crowe's committed and highly threatening performance has to make the role seem better developed than it actually is. In a film about neo-Nazis, we do need to know more about the skinheads' ringleader, but by leaving his psychological make-up undercharacterised and offering no counter to his racist propagandising, Wright lets him off the hook much too easily. If all he amounts to is a psychotic monster, this makes for a pretty lame piece of writing on which to build a purportedly serious look at the appeal of the contemporary far right.

Wright's formal approach muddies the issues yet further. John Mc-Naughton's Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer has shown that a degree-zero filmic style can distance an audience from events on screen and so fruitfully allow them to question their responses; but here, with sharp cutting in music-video style, a camera sweeping mercurially through the action and forceful Oi songs pumping away on the soundtrack, Wright has chosen to shoot the thuggery in as viscerally provocative a style as possible. One supposes that the intention in forcing such a pronounced response is to make us question it, but by delivering the thrills which Henry does not, Wright seems to offer a vicarious enjoyment to parallel the buzz the characters get from kicking heads in.

Romper Stomper is much too downbeat to merit accusations of glorifying these bully boys or the brutality they perpetrate - they do come out firmly on the losing side, after all - but, even though trying to second-guess audience response is one of the most specious of critical activities, such moments do give cause for concern. To Wright's credit, he later throws in a scene (the rumpus at Gabe's father's house is artfully underlaid with the big tenor duet from Bizet's Pearl Fishers) which, by way of comparison, comments on the way in which music and montage combine to seductively aestheticise screen violence. But it's a point which will probably pass by those whose skills in reading a film operate at a less sophisticated level, precisely those who might most profit from picking up on it.

Trevor Johnston

Shadows and Fog

USA 1991

Director: Woody Allen

Certificate
15
Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Company
Orion Pictures
Executive Producers

Orion Pictures

Executive Producers

Jack Rollins

Charles H. Joffe

Producer

Robert Greenhut

Co-producers

Helen Robin
Joseph Hartwick
Associate Producer
Thomas Reilly
Production Co-ordinator
Helen Robin

Production Manager
Joseph Hartwick
Location Manager
James A. Davis
Casting
Juliet Taylor
Assistant Directors

Thomas Reifly
Richard Patrick
Screenplay
Woody Allen
Director of Photography
Carlo Di Palma

Camera Operator
Dick Mingalone
Optical Effects Supervisors
Balsmeyer & Everett

Susan E. Morse
Production Designer
Santo Loquasto
Art Director
Speed Hopkins
Set Decorators

George DeTitta Jnr Amy Marshall Set Dresser Dave Weinman

Scenic Artists
James Sorice
Cosmo Sorice

"The Cannon Song From Little Threepenny Music" by Kurt Weill. performed by Canadian Chamber Ensemble: "The Cannon Song From Little Threepenny Music" by Kurt Weill. performed by The London Sinfonetta; "When Day is Done" by Robert Katscher. B. G. DeSylva, "Ja, Ja, Die Frau'n Sind Meine Schwache Seite" by K. Schwebach, A. Egen, "When the White Lilacs Bloom Again" by Franz Doelle, Fritz Rotter, performed by The Jack Hylton Orchestra; *Prologue From the Seven Deadly Sins" by Kurt Weill, Bertold Brecht; "Alabama Song" by Kurt Weill, Bertold Brecht, performed by Marek Weber and His Orchestra; "Moritat From the Threepenny Opera" by Kurt Weill. Bertold Brecht. performed by Berlin Staatsoper Costume Design

performed by Berl Staatsoper Costume Design Jeffrey Kurland Wardrobe Bill Christians Patricia Eiben Make-up Bernadette Mazur Titles/Opticals The Effects House

Sound Design Consultant
Don Sable
Supervising Sound Editor
Bob Hein
Folow Editor

Foley Editor Lori Kornspun Sound Recordists
James Sabat
Frank Graziadei
Dubbing:
Kerry Kelly
Harry Higgins
Sound Re-recordist
Lee Dichter
Foley Artists
Elisha Birnbaum

Brian Vancho Cast **Woody Allen** Kleinman **Kathy Bates Jodie Foster** Anne Lange Lily Tomlin Prostitutes John Cusack Student Jack Mia Farrow Irmy Fred Gwynne Robert Silver Hacker's Followers Julie Kayner Alma Madonna Marie John Malkovich Clown Kenneth Mars Magician Kate Nelligan **Donald Pleasence** Doctor

Philip Bosco Mr Paulsen Robert Joy Spiro's Assistant **Wallace Shawn** Simon Carr **Kurtwood Smith** Vogel's Follower Josef Sommer **David Ogden Stiers** Hacker Michael Kirby Killer James Rebhorn Victor Argo **Daniel Von Bargen** Vigilantes **Camille Saviola** Landlady Tim Loomis

Fat Lady
Dennis Vestunis
Strongman
Andrew Mark Berman
Paul Anthony Stewart
Thomas Boister
Students
Fred Melamed
Undesirables Onlooker

Greg Stebner

Police Chief

Dwarf

John C. Reilly
Brian Smiar
Michael P. Troy
Remak Ramsey
Ron Turek
Cops at Police Station
Peter McRobbie
Bartender:
Ira Wheeler
Cop with Priest
Eszter Balint
Woman with Baby

Charles Cragin
Spiro
W. H. Macy
Cop with Spiro
Tom Riis Farrell
Ron Weyand

Rebecca Gibson

Baby

Vigilantes with Spiro
Richard Riehle
Max Robinson
Roustabouts

7,694 feet 85 minutes

The 1920s. An unnamed port town is under curfew as a ruthless murderer is on the loose. One foggy night he claims another victim by his usual method of strangulation. Kleinman, a lowly local, is roused from his slumbers by a vigilante group who demand he join them in their search for the killer. Meanwhile the circus has arrived in town. Irmy, the sword-swallower, and her boyfriend the Clown argue about marriage and children. Later Irmy, discovering the Clown in flagrante delicto with Marie the seductive high-wire artist, decides to pack her bags and leave.

On the other side of town, Kleinman visits the Doctor, who is carrying out autopsies on the murderer's victims, to find out if he is in on the vigilantes' plan. After wandering the streets, Irmy is offered shelter at the local bordello. where the prostitutes are entertaining a group of young students. One of them, Jack, takes a shine to Irmy and offers her \$700 to sleep with them; she reluctantly agrees. Kleinman takes leave of the Doctor, who is later confronted and murdered by the Killer. Various "socially undesirable" families are rounded up. The Doctor's body is discovered. Kleinman is taken in for questioning by the police. The bordello is raided and Irmy is brought into the police station.

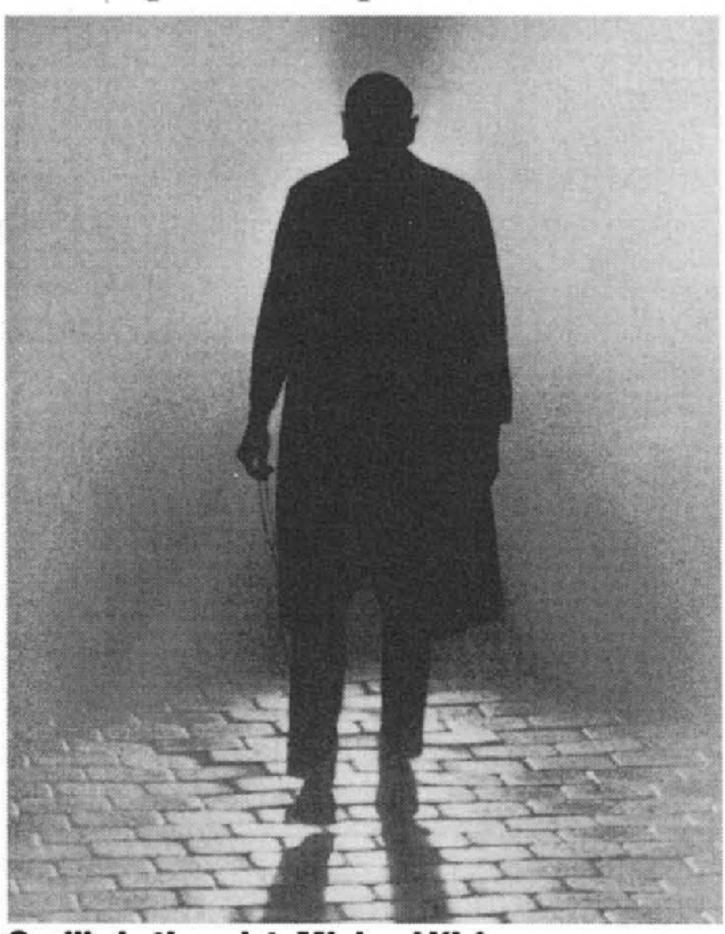
When Kleinman and Irmy are released, he takes her under his wing. Kleinman apprehends someone he believes to be the killer, but he turns out to be his boss, Mr Paulsen, from whom he is waiting to hear about a promotion. Meanwhile the Clown goes drinking in a bar and meets Jack; the Clown learns that Jack has slept with Irmy. Irmy decides that she wants to donate her money to the church and asks Kleinman to take it in. Outside the church she meets a destitute mother and child and asks Kleinman to retrieve the money to give to the woman instead. Kleinman is then involved in a dispute between various vigilante groups. Spiro, a clairvoyant, arrives and reveals that Kleinman is hiding stolen evidence that links him to the killings. The mob sets upon him but he escapes. He goes to visit Alma, the ex-fiancee he once jilted, but she throws him out, saying she never wants to see him again.

Meanwhile Irmy bumps into the Clown and they discover the body of the mother Irmy met earlier. The child is still alive and they take her in. Kleinman finds refuge at the bordello, but the mob catches up with him there and he is chased into the night. He bumps into Simon Carr, a work colleague, and learns that he has been sacked. On the run, Kleinman eventually ends up at the circus, where the Killer also appears. Kleinman and the circus Magician try to outwit the Killer, and catch him with the aid of a mirror, but he disappears. The Magician offers the destitute Kleinman, who has in the past taken an amateur interest in the magic arts, a job at the circus, which he accepts. The Magician makes them both disappear.

Eclipsed by the headline fuss over Husbands and Wives, Shadows and Fog comes into circulation in Britain out of step with the rest of Allen's oeuvre, like a lesser, odd-ball sibling with no claim to scandalous fame. Chronologically, it comes after Alice and is best read as a follow-on to that film in which a would-be Manhattan socialite, steps through the lookingglass world of her city and, aided by 'drink me' magic potions, finds a truer reflection of herself. In Alice, Allen dealt with the mythic realms of the imagination in which invisibility and flying are quite credible - remember the scene in which, encumbered with children, Alice visits the circus on her illicit tryst with the saxophonist Joe. Everyone needs variety in their lives to provide a vision of the possible.

In Shadows and Fog, that variety takes over wholesale as Allen leads his audience into a black and white Expressionist wonderland that could be the setting for Lang's M or for that matter, E. A. Dupont's Variety (not forgetting Bergman's Sawdust and Tinsel). The film has the disjointed logic of a mid-winter nightmare shot by Karl Freund with Kurt Weill providing the score (a crisp pastiche of Freund, courtesy of Carlo de Palma, authentic Weill), with the starlight-garlanded circus installed on the edge of town like some magical outpost.

At the centre of all this is Kleinman, the quintessential 'little man' and another 'K', who wakes up out of a stupor to embark on the most troubling trials. As Kleinman, Allen is in schlemihl overdrive, playing up to the klutzy neurotic persona of his early films memorably dubbed "the funny ones" in Starlight Memories – but here he finds himself locked into far darker concerns. Most obviously the style and menacing mood of Shadows and Fog (the title just a shade away from Resnais' Auschwitz documentary Nuit et Brouillard) point to the Weimar years. But littered with thumping clues, the analis almost trite: the Doctor performs his autopsies on the murdered bodies, as though in the very act of probing them he will accomplish his mission "to discover where insanity stops and evil begins". "Socially undesirable" families are rounded up and there is much snatched chatter about a master plan – complete with mention



Gorilla in the mist: Michael Kirby

of a "zero hour" – in which Kleinman is unsure as to what role he plays; later he is told by Simon Carr that he is "more suited to extermination than life on the planet."

These are the most cliched conspiratorial rustlings to which Allen introduces a typically playful paranoid panic. When Kleinman presents the two henchman-like priests at the church with Irmy's bordello benefits, they magnanimously erase his name from a mysterious list that they are compiling. When he then goes back to retrieve the money they reinstate him, but this time sinisterly circle his name. But if Kleinman is dogged by fears of persecution, he is hounded also by guilty feelings - why else would an innocent man steal a wine glass that makes him party to the crime? Kleinman's innocence, however, is in itself an illusion. It transpires that he is indeed culpable of a most heinous misdemeanour - he was discovered in flagrante delicto with his fiancee's sister on their wedding day. The guilt for this very real emotional killing finds itself displaced onto the more phantasmagorical level of the murders (the wine glass takes on a particular significance given its symbolic junction in Jewish wedding ceremonies). It is text-book stuff – the analyst's dream dream.

And in such a dream, what better doppelgänger for Kleinman/Allen than the Clown, the artist whose greatest fear is of "attempting to make people laugh and failing"? It is a kind of terrifying impotence, allusions to which are made clear when the Clown finds out - through his strange meeting with Jack - that Irmy is certainly not amused, either in the comic or the sexual sense. Meanwhile Kleinman, a man who proves to be powerless against the state, experiences a similar trauma when bedded by one of the prostitutes at the whorehouse, or horror house as it is accidently called at one point (there is more to trip over than the high wire here). Indeed, the parallel between the circus, with all its freaky side-shows, and the bordello is conspicuously elaborated upon. "I'm a swordswallower," Irmy innocently declares amongst the prostitutes, only to be met by the lewd riposte, "That's my speciality too." These are two arenas where crazy fantasies can be played out for a small fee; cinema is a third. If Shadows and Fog resurrects a movie past like an old canvas, Allen projects onto it another fear of impotence - the anxieties of a director who feels annihilated by his cinematic forefathers' longer shadows. Kleinman is the amateur magician who, when finally asked to join the circle, finds himself vanished into thin air by his new-found mentor. Peering through the Shadows and Fog, we get the sense that Allen feels similarly diminished by those he conjures up. "They need illusions like they need the air," declares the Magician in his final act. This restless, almost hallucinogenic film suggests a director suffocated by his art.

Lizzie Francke

The Silent Touch

United Kingdom/Poland/Denmark 1992

Director: Krzysztof Zanussi

Certificate
15
Distributor
Mayfair Entertainment
Production Companies
Mark Forstater
Productions (London)/
Tor Film Group
(Warsaw)/Metronome
Productions (Lyngby)
With the participation
of British Screen/
The European

With the participation of British Screen/
The European
Co-production Fund
(UK)/The Danish Film
Institute/Sandrews
Film & Theatre AB/The
Swedish Film Institute
Executive Producer

Tor:
Ryszard Straszewski

Producer
Mark Forstater
Co-producers
Mads Egmont
Christensen
Krzysztof Zanussi
Associate Producers
Raymond Day
Michal Szczerbic
Production Co-ordinators
Jan Janik
Maggie Kosowicz

Production Manager Vibeke Windelow Location Managers Grazyna Kozlowska Karin Trolle

Casting

Assistant Directors
Marek Brodzki
Magdalena Szwarcbart
Krzysztof Maj
Marianne Moritzen

Screenplay
Peter Morgan
Mark Wadlow
Story
Krzysztof Zanussi

Edward Zebrowski

Director of Photography

Jaroslaw Zamojda

Editor

Marek Denys
Production Designer
Ewa Braun
Music

Wojciech Kilar Music Extracts

"Song" by Claude Debussy, Paul Bourget, performed by K. Mierzejewska; "Bolero" by Maurice Ravel; "Klaszczmy W Dlonie" by Mikolaj Gomolka; "Sonata for 4 Hands", "Sonata for Violins and Piano" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; "Progress II" by The Team 'Armia'; "Japan" by Tomasz 'Kciuk' Jaworski; "Exodus" by Wojciech Kilar performed by WOSPRI TV Orchestra, Katowice and the Polish Radio Choir of Krakow

Music Consultant
Malgorzata Jaworska

Costume Design Dorota Roqueplo Wardrobe Monika Sajko Make-up Anna Adamek Grazyna Dabrowska Plume Partners **Sound Recordists** Wieslawa Dembinska Music: Michal Gola Jacek Zietkowski Dolby stereo Sound Re-Recordist Richard King

Body Consultant

Robert Lloyd

Adviser Henning Ornbak Cast Max von Sydow Henry Kesdi Lothaire Bluteau Stefan Bugajski Sarah Miles Helena Kesdi Sofie Grabol Annette Berg Aleksander Bardini Professor Jerzy Kern Peter Hesse Overgaard Joseph Kesdi Lars Lunoe Doctor Slawomira Lozinska Doctor's Wife **Trevor Cooper** Muller Stanislaw Brejdygant Maier **Beata Tyszkiewicz** Gelda Maja Plaszynska **Baby Thomas** Peter Thurrell Wiktor Zborowski Krystyna Mierzejewska Stanislaw Holly **Catherine Thornborrow Eugenia Herman** Interviewees **Piotr Wojtowicz** Wasia Maslennikow Television Crew Krystyna Chmielewski

8,612 feet 96 minutes

Secretary

In Cracow a young music student, Stefan Bugajski, hears in his sleep a haunting sequence of notes which he recognises as being by Henry Kesdi, a composer who has been silent for the last 40 years. Determined to help Kesdi complete the refrain, he embarks for Denmark, where Kesdi is now living with his wife Helena. He takes with him a letter from his teacher, Professor Kern, an old acquain-

tance of Kesdi, who remains unconvinced that the silence that descended on Kesdi after the death of his first wife in the Holocaust can ever be broken. In their house set in its own woods, Helena Kesdi tries to interest the sick and reclusive Henry in an offer from his nephew Joseph to finance a relaunch of his career. Joseph and his associates are thrown out. Simultaneously Stefan arrives and is seen lurking in the woods. Henry grabs his gun, but Stefan manages to slip his letter to the sceptical Helena. Next day Stefan darts into the house, tells Henry that his bad back is caused by sleeping over a stream that runs beneath the house and counsels a change of bedroom. The furious Henry knifes him in the wrist and Stefan retreats to the woods.

The next night Henry moves his bedding to the other side of the house and his back pain eases. He invites Stefan for breakfast. Stefan plays him the refrain, which Henry recognises as a Jewish melody he once tried to use. He orders that Stefan be given the spare room. That night Stefan cures him of asthma by applying pressure to his temples. Henry insists that he is an angel. Henry throws himself into work and asks for a musical secretary. That night he goes to Helena's bed for the first time in years. Next morning, Stefan finds Henry a secretary in the young conservatoire student Annette Berg. Henry's doctor insists that the return to work may kill him. Annette arrives for work and Henry discusses music and flirts with her. Stefan arranges a date with Annette, which sends Henry into a rage. The date goes badly, Annette rejecting Stefan's advances. As Henry's music progresses, so does his feeling for Annette, and they begin an affair. As the music and the love affair become more intense, Stefan suffers excruciating pain in his wounded arm.

In a television interview on completion of the new work, Henry ascribes his new creativity to his guardian angel. Stefan's wound now bleeds regularly and at Henry's birthday party he collapses and is rushed to hospital. Rehearsals proceed, while the doctor warns Stefan that Henry's symptoms are unmistakable. Annette tells Helena that she is pregnant. Helena visits Stefan in hospital and orders him to leave as soon as he recovers. Henry conducts the gala premiere of his opus while Stefan and the doctor watch on TV relay. At the thunderous climax, Henry collapses and is taken to hospital, where Stefan is found to have recovered. A year later, Stefan, now teaching music in Cracow, gets a telephone call from Helena summoning him to visit the dying Henry. She and Annette are taking care of him and Annette's asthmatic baby son. Stefan tells Henry that he can no longer help him, and Henry, now reconciled to death, comforts him. Stefan picks up the asthmatic child and the boy's wheezing stops.

The Silent Touch is about art and inspiration, art and goodness, art and life. It combines lengthy dis-



Get some sleep: Sofie Grabol, Max von Sydow

cussion of these subjects with the creation of a new work by the composer Henry Kesdi. But films about music are notoriously difficult to bring off, as another central European director, István Szabó, demonstrated recently with Meeting Venus. And The Silent Touch, as a film about art, is neither original nor inspired. It is not just that the sub-Orffian oratorio perormed at the climax (in fact, "Exodus" by Wojciech Kilar, whose music can be heard in Francis Ford Coppola's Dracula) is, for all its thunder, unconvincing as the release of imprisoned genius. It is also that all the talk of the victory of art and goodness over silence and evil lacks substance - the perfunctory treatment of the theme of genocide is typical in this respect - just as the extravagant complaints Henry makes about modern music as a "pollution of silence", though occasionally amusing (it all reminds him of toenail clippings), are predictable and evasive.

This predictability extends to the characters - selfish, irascible artist Henry, long-suffering but loyal wife Helena, vital young muse Annette and to the doggedly articulated plot, in which the intrusions into the household of both Stefan and Annette follow heavily signposted paths. The dialogue too, despite its regular returning to the subject of passion, seems etiolated and highmindedly old-fashioned. The Silent Touch is the first project to have benefited from the European Co-Production Fund and the script, originally a story by Zanussi and a Polish collaborator, then worked into a screenplay by Peter Morgan and Mark Wadlow, shows signs of the statelessness such projects risk.

In another respect, though, international co-operation has worked well. The initial scenes in Cracow with Stefan waking from nightmare like a pale, haunted Dostoevskian youth, and talking feverishly to his professor (Aleksander Bardini, the doctor in Kieslowski's Decalogue 2) and his later sojourn in the Danish woods are the most confident in the film, with an assured sense of place and behaviour. Central to the meaning of The Silent Touch is the enigma of the 'angel' Stefan and his mysterious effect on Henry. In the Acts of the Apostles St Stephen, the first Christian martyr, is described as "full of grace and power," as doing "great wonders and signs among the people," for whom "his face was like the face of an angel." This Stefan bursts into Henry's household as astonishingly as Terence Stamp in Pasolini's Teorema, and Henry himself is initially bemused and resistant (both to art and to goodness), once even calling him Mephistopheles. What is the nature of their symbiosis? Stefan himself seems to have no life - no talent as a composer, no success with Annette - and yet he alone can restore Henry both physically and artistically. His wound, caused by Henry, bleeds like stigmata at the moments of Henry's greatest passion. And at the end, Henry, reconciled to art, life and death, is able to console him in return. Though this allegory of the power of goodness remains opaque and not entirely persuasive, nevertheless it is precisely its lack of explicitness that makes it the resonating core of the film.

As Henry, the petulant, tyrannical genius, Max von Sydow has little to do that he has not done many times beore - except perhaps to smash so much crockery. But Sarah Miles, rarely seen these days, brings a taut convintion to the fading Helena. And Lothaire Bluteau displays the same startling intensity he showed in Jesus of Montreal and Black Robe in the central role of Stefan, by turns exuberant and anguished, confident and bewildered. Asked by the doctor why he was so determined that Henry should complete his opus, he says, "I just wanted to get some sleep."

Julian Graffy

Sniper

USA 1992

Film House

David Crone

Scott Smith

Art Director

Editor

Camera Operators

Danny Batterham

Production Designer

Nicholas McCallum

Herbert Pinter

Set Decorators

Angus Tattle

Scenic Artist

Leanne Cornish

Simon Clayton

Special Effects

Brian Pearce

David Hardie

Gary Chang

Richard Whitfield

"Medicine Man"

Costume Design

Ray Summers

Allan Apone

Barney Cabral

Sound Editors

Kelly Cabral

Toby Brown

Costume Supervisor

Kerry Thompson

Special Make-up Effects

Supervising Sound Editor

Mark Hollingsworth

Donlee Jorgenson

Norto Sepulveda

Phil Haberman

Sound Recordist

Paul Brincat

Dolby stereo

Doug Turner

Robert Glass

Ray West

Sound Re-recordists

David John West

by Henry Lee Summer

Music Editor

Brian Cox

Music

Song

Director: Luis Llosa

Foley Artists Certificate Patrick Cabral Diane Marshall Distributor Advisers Entertainment **Production Company** Military: **Baltimore Pictures** William Curtin **Executive Producers** Sniper: Mark Johnson Walon Green Patrick Wachsberger Producer Robert L. Rosen Stunts Greg Stuart Co-producers Jim Gorman Richard Boué Charles J.D. Schlissel Armourer William Curtin **Associate Producers** Amanda Nelligan Gregory A. Gale Cast Grant Hill **Tom Berenger Production Co-ordinator** Tom Beckett Jennifer Crowley Billy Zane Unit Production Manager Richard Miller Grant Hill Aden Young **Location Manager** Doug Papich Murray Boyd Ken Radley El Cirujano Casting Louis Di Giaimo J.T. Walsh **Assistant Directors** Colin Fletcher Reinaldo Arenas Nikki Long Cacique John Martin **Gary Swanson** Screenplay Michael Frost Beckner **Hank Garrett** Crash Leyland Director of Photography Bill Butler Alvarez Vanessa Steele Colour Mrs Alvarez Atlab Prints: Carloz Alvarez

Soldier in Barn

Major Tom D. Ferran III **Stunt Co-ordinators** Glenn Ruehland Bobby Foxworth

Viewed with superstitious mistrust by the regular marines, his only show of affection is for the dog tags of dead former partners that he carries around with him and fingers absentmindedly like worry beads. Reaction to Miller is one of instant antipathy and mutual disrespect, their foray into the jungle a cagey exchange of cocky greenhorn with a taciturn man-who's-seen-it-all. Within Beckett's realm, Miller's politi-Beckett's Senior Officer cal authority falls by the wayside and he's coerced into helping a local guerrilla troupe in exchange for their help Officer in Washington through unknown terrain. Unable to Admiral in Washington pull the trigger on a man he has in his sights, Miller earns everyone's scorn and is further harangued as they continue towards their target. Though heavily protected by bodyguards the assassination is successful, Ripoly but on their retreat Miller flips out - a **Ted Gebert** combination of having killed for the Ripoly's Friend first time and Beckett's claim that the mission isn't over yet. They start to fight but are soon interrupted by the appearance of enemy troops who cap-Mountain Top Co-pilot ture Beckett as Miller heads towards Christos A. Linou the approaching rescue helicopter.

Tortured to the point of unconsciousness by the infamous El Cirujano (Miller's 'missed' target in the guerilla debacle), Miller reappears and saves his partner. Dragging Beckett to the new pick-up point, Miller is unaware that one of Alvarez's men is tailing him; as he moves in for the kill Beckett spots him and guns him down. The score even, the two snipers clamber into the helicopter and fly back to their respective 'real' lives.

Panama, post Noriega. Fearful of

interference by rebel forces in

the upcoming democratic elections,

Washington government agencies set

in motion a covert operation to assassi-

nate their leader, General Alvarez.

Ambitious young bureaucrat Richard

Miller is sent to partner master marine

sniper Tom Beckett. The mission is sim-

ple on paper: one shot, then out. But

Miller - with no combat experience

and a by-the-book manner - is unpre-

pared for the grisly realities of a tidily

mented man whose legendary success

has cast him as ever more the outsider.

Veteran of 78 kills, Beckett is a tor-

contracted death.



Bite the bullet: Billy Zane

Frederick Miragliotta Raul Othos Tyler Copin

Edward Wiley DeSilva/Rebel Sniper William Curtin Mountain Top Pilot **Howard Bosse**

Mountain Top Sniper **Christopher Morsley** Soldier at Pool Table Donald Batee Soldier at Bar Raj Sidhu

Roy Edmonds Cabrera Johnny Raaen Crew Chief Loury Cortez Father Ruiz Joroe Bustamante Rebel Captain

8,763 feet 97 minutes

Sniper - not The Sniper nor Snipers, non-specific and singular, like Predator. It's a title that speaks of function as identity, an efficient menace. Distant, with maybe a touch of idolatry. Who's going to be drawn to a film called Sniper, except perhaps gun freaks? It sounds too detached to be an all-out action film, conjuring up phrases like "surgical strikes" - snipers don't touch, they reach out and tamper with history.

This is a war film shrunk down to the barest essentials - in this twoman unit, the all-male camaraderie is reduced to one-on-one exchanges. Difference – age, education, aspiration – is strictly between the two: common ground is the film's target, the closure it moves towards. Miller and Beckett's exchanges are repeatedly phrased as conflict, but on screen it all looks very different. Both film-star beautiful, their contrasting expert/beginner statuses cast them as father and son, this mission a rite of passage. The moral horror of killing is the script's intended address, Beckett admitting to a loathing for his profession, but what the audience sees is gunplay spectacle and emoting, through which the boy becomes a man. On that count, Sniper is not the psychologically insightful thriller its writers want it to be, a shortfall that formulaic dialogue and characterisation do nothing to obscure. But director Llosa (incidentally Mario Vargas Llosa's cousin) is a fine action director, and it's when Berenger and Zane aren't obliged to breathe life into weak lines that the film erupts into its own with a series of tensely drawn combat sequences. Brian Pearson's special effects sniper footage - of rifle sight p.o.v. and tracking the trajectory of s-l-o-w-e-d down speeding bullets doesn't necessarily get you any closer to the sniper's psyche, but does have a rollercoaster thrill to it (and a future home in 1001 students' essays on the cinematic gaze).

Concentration on the 'personal' aspects of war, though, is at the expense of any consideration of American interventionist policies, Alvarez's badness taken as reason enough. This naive world-view permeates into Sniper's vision of back home - Miller's fiancee waiting, Beckett's impossible dream of retiring with a fish farm: fighting for the American way. Just oldfashioned, perhaps, but embodying a reactionary politic that hedges the 'right' of anyone to kill for country in the first place - a fundamental concern, surely, for Miller as he moves from armchair patriot to active participant. It's these major oversights that keep Sniper within the realms of the pedestrian, unsatisfying with occassional glimmers of a lean action film bubbling up underneath. Berenger and Zane, as alone in this script as they are in the jungle, do what they can with the cliches, sniper père even coming across as fairly sympathetic. But this is no journey into the heart of darkness, more an undercover ramble with Uncle Sam.

Paul Tarrago

El Sol de Membrillo (The Quince Tree Sun)

Spain 1991

Director: Victor Erice

Certificate

Distributor Artificial Eye **Production Company** María Moreno P.C. With the participation of Euskal Media/Igeldo Zine Produkzioak With financial assistance from The

Spanish Institute of Cinematography and Audovisual Arts **Executive Producer** Maria Moreno **Associate Producer** Angel Amigo

Assistant Directors Jos Oliver Francisco J. Lucio Original Idea

Antonio López Victor Erice Based on a work by Antonio Lopez García Directors of Photography

Javier Aguirresarobe Angel Luis Fernández In colour Video Photography

José Luis Lopez Linares Juan Ignacio San Mateo

Pascal Gaigne Sound Recordists Ricardo Steimberg Daniel Goldstein Sound Re-recordist

Eduardo Fernández Sound Effects Taller de Ruidos

Antonio López María Moreno Enrique Gran José Carrtero María López Carmen López Elisa Ruiz Amalia Avia Lucio Muñoz Esperanza Parada Julio López Fernández Janusz Pietrziak Marek Domagala Grzegorz Ponikwia Fan Xiao Ming

12,353 feet 137 minutes

Yan Sheng Dong

Subtitles

Saturday, September 29, 1990. The Spanish artist Antonio López prepares the canvas for his new project: a painting of the quince tree which, four years ago, he planted in the garden of his house in Madrid. His planning is meticulous, with a suspended plumbline to measure the exact centre of the composition, pegs in the ground to ensure that his vantage point remains constant, and paint marks on the tree itself to provide a precise horizontal alignment. Monday October 1: three Polish workmen arrive to continue the task of converting the house to a complex of studios: their hammering rouses the lodger, José, a young painter. As he leaves for an English lesson, he chats with María Moreno, Antonio's wife, who supervises the workmen and also has a studio in the building.

Antonio hopes to capture the special light of the early autumn, when the 'quince tree sun' shines through the leaves and ripens the fruit. But this year the weather is frequently overcast and he has to put a transparent awning over the tree to protect himself from squalls of wind and rain as he paints. Visitors include his daughters, María and Carmen, and an old friend from his student days, Enrique Gran, now a portrait-painter.

Together they recall their contemporaries, their tutors, and their shared passion for music, and they discuss Antonio's copy of the Michelangelo painting. The Last Judgement. October 24: unable to contend with the constant changes of light, Antonio decides that it is time to prepare a new canvas, with Maria's help, and his 'first draft' is deposited in the cellar. October 26: a puddle of rainwater at his feet, he begins anew, drawing the quince tree in intricate detail. The weather soon improves, but the days are now much colder.

Visited by a Chinese admirer, Fan Xiao Ming, and her interpreter Yan Sheng Dong, Antonio explains aspects of his technique and his identification with the tree's development. He hopes to finish before the quinces fall, but as November goes by it is clear that he is losing the race. November 23: Enrique comes to encourage him, holding drooping leaves in place to be sketched, and they harmonise a favourite song. By December 3, the tree is shedding its fruit, and on Monday December 10 Antonio at last admits defeat. The workmen take away the awning and sample some ripe quince without enthusiasm. Now that Antonio is available to her again, Maria sets up a partially-completed canvas, poses him on a bed, and resumes painting. At first he is full of suggestions, but soon he falls asleep and she leaves him to his dreams. The following spring, the tree sprouts new leaves and paint-free buds.

Such an expanse of years separates the three films of Victor Erice, who has filled the intervals with work for the movie magazine Nuestro Cine and screenplays for other directors, that it is probably unreasonable to expect from The Quince Tree Sun a clear continuation of the moods and motifs of Spirit of the Beehive (1973) and The South (1983). The particular attraction of his first two films was that they matched each other so well, both in the beauty of Erice's visual phrasing and in his exploration of small families haunted by inarticulate secrets. At first shock, The Quince Tree Sun seems a complete break from these intricate stories: it presents itself as a documentary about an artist at work, his daily routine pedantically dated, his method piercingly scrutinised, his visitors dispassionately spied upon, his achievements and failures recorded without comment. According to Erice, wise after the event, this collection of actualities provides ready answers to the immediate questions, "Who is the artist?", "What is he painting?", and "How does he do it?". Fortunately, the experience is rather less simple.

The artist, for a start, is unidentified by any conventional means such as an opening title, catalogues, posters, the usual decor of a public life - to such an extent that, regardless of whether Antonio López is widely known in art circles outside Spain, he could well be a completely fictional character, his paints applied to canvas either by a talented actor or by neatly-edited sleight of hand in the manner of La Belle Noiseuse. The film avoids the usual documentary approach, in which López would have talked direct to camera, introduced the film crew to his visitors, and conceded that the awareness of being filmed inevitably affects his manner, his behaviour and his work. Instead, Erice marshals 'reality' into a form of deception by seeking to persuade the audience of his own absence. He is much assisted by his 'cast', who contrive to ignore him with such conviction that one could swear that the Polish workmen studied their roles from Moonlighting and Riff-Raff, while Enrique Gran, bursting with anecdotes, clearly exercises an epic talent whether or not any camera happens to roll in his vicinity.

The drama is greatly enhanced by the fact - if we can accept it as factual of Lopez's struggle with his subject on a steadily dwindling time-scale. The mystery-suspense aspects of Erice's other films unexpectedly reappear here not only in the underlying questions of who, what and how, but also in the sense of a self-imposed struggle against ungovernable forces - the efforts by López to decipher an acceptable portrait of his arboreal model before it disintegrates. Reinforcing this detective structure is the welcome intervention of a Chinese admirer whose interrogation elicits most of



◀ the answers the film has so far refused to provide - such as what the tree is doing there and why López is painting it. Beautifully framed by an apparently invisible lens peering out at her from a nest of leaves, she extracts from López the vital secret of a technique that has bestowed almost more paint on the tree than on the canvas. along with his admission of an obsessive identification with the tree's cycle of growth and yield. The insight is valuable, partly for the complexity it imparts to the "Who is the artist?" puzzle and partly for the link it clarifies between this 'fiction' and the earlier films. By apparent accident, Erice has found another troubled patriarch with mysterious and elusive skills, irremediably discontented with his achievements, vaguely adrift from his family.

As if these correlative themes at last insist too loudly, Erice changes his story when the quinces fall. Suddenly the camera shows itself and stands transfixed by the spectacle of the decaying fruit in admission that the evolution from mellow gold to wrinkled decay has been the prime objective all along. His project split in two, Erice leaves the 'documentary' to take its course and unmasks the surprise ending to his thriller: López becomes a subject from his wife's canvas, a man like other Erice protagonists, seen through female eyes. Firmly fending off his suggestions for improvement, María paints him in anything but quince-tree colours, laid out formally on a bed, dead or dreaming, a model of evasion. It would be no surprise that she turns out to have co-produced the film, except that her presence throughout has been so muted as to seem irrelevant. We find, through her artwork, a manipulation that López has sought to exorcise from his own canvases; where he seems honestly to have attempted to let the tree express itself, María permits no such nonsense. She paints (and films) him in accordance with her concept.

They argue over what, in her painting, he should be holding. He produces a small crystal sphere, and before you can say 'Charles Foster Kane', it's falling from his hand. As a man of the cinema, Erice should know better than this - and of course does. While The Quince Tree Sun is indeed an enquiry into a life unsure of its meaning, the crystal also reflects an aside in the Borges story 'Death and the Compass', which Erice was adapting into a screenplay in 1990 alongside his preparations for filming López. In this light, his production stands revealed as a Borgesian document, packed with precise designations, meaningless measurements and unreliable histories - a detective story driven by a predestined circularity to prove nothing of major consequence. If López is the tolerant humourist he appears to be, he must have enjoyed this leisurely, ambivalent interpretation of his arduous autumn, in which his work gradually and uncontrollably becomes the margin to an altogether different memoir.

Philip Strick

Trespass

USA 1992

Director: Walter Hill Certificate Distributor **Production Company** Universal **Executive Producers** Robert Zemeckis Bob Gale Producer Neil Canton Co-producer Michael S. Glick **Production Co-ordinator** Cynthia Von Suhr **Unit Production Manager** Michael S. Glick **Location Manager** David Salven 2nd Unit Director Allan Graf Casting Reuben Cannon **Assistant Directors** Barry K. Thomas Sandra Middleton Kevin Williams Screenplay Bob Gale Robert Zemeckis **Director of Photography** Lloyd Ahern Colour DeLuxe **Camera Operators** Robert La Bonge Bill Barber Video Operator Greg Morse

Editor
Freeman Davies
Production Designer
Jon Hutman
Art Director
Charles Breen
Set Design
Kathleen Sullivan
Set Decorator
Beth Rubino
Set Dressers
Russell Jones
Rex Farmer
Tommy Gilbert

Buddy Rodgers

Co-ordinator
Joe Di Gaetano
Special Effects
Foreman:
Charles Edward
Stewart
Bob Vazquez
Jeffrey Knott
Kathleen (KT) Tonkin
Russell Hardee
Ken Reid
Tim Tonkin
David Kutchinkski
Sam Barkan

Ry Cooder

Music performed by

Ry Cooder

Jim Keltner

Jon Hassell

Music Supervisors

Sharon Boyle

Jorge Hinginsa

Jorge Hinojosa

Music Editor

Bunny Andrews

Songs

Trespass" by and

lce Cube; "Party Lights"
by and performed by
Junior Brown; "Depths
of Hell" by Ice T, DJ
Aladdin, performed by
Ice T featuring Daddy
Nitro; "Quick Way Out"
by W,C and Coolio,
performed by W.C and
The Maad Circle; "You
Know What I'm About"
by and performed by
Lord Finesse; "Gotta
Do What I Gotta Do" by

C. Ridenhour, G. G-Wiz.

performed by Ice T and

H. Shocklee, K. Shocklee, performed by Public Enemy; "I'm Gonna Smoke Him" by Donald Lamont, Bilal Bashir, performed by Donald D; "Don't Be a 304" by Jason Lewis, performed by AMG: "I Check My Bank" by and performed by Sir Mix-A-Lot; "Gotta Get Over (Taking Loot)" by Keith Elam. Christopher Martin, performed by Gang Starr; "On the Wall" by and performed by Black Sheep Costume Design Dan Moore **Costume Supervisor** Colby Bart Make-up Key: Jay Cannistraci Judy Ponder-Patton Title Design Eric Fitzgerald Titles/Opticals Pacific Title **Supervising Sound Editor** Jay Wilkinson Sound Editors David A. Arnold Lucy Coldsnow Teri E. Dorman Scott A. Hecker David Kulczycki John A. Larsen Rodger Pardee ADR Editor Jerelyn J. Harding Sound Recordists Charles M. Wilborn Brion Paccassi ADR: Alan Bond Foley: Nerses Gezalyan Music: Allen Sides Dolby stereo Sound Re-recordists Gregg Landaker Additional: Steve Maslow Kevin O'Connell Charleen Richards Foley: im Ashwill Special Sound **Effects Design** John Joseph Thomas **Foley Artists** Dan O'Connell Alicia Stevenson Stunt Co-ordinator Allan Graf Stunts Ken Bates Nick Brett Tony Brubaker Jeff Cadiente Chris Durand Ousaun Elam Steve Kelso Ed Mathews Mario Roberts Gilbert Rosales

Cast
Bill Paxton
Vince
Ice T
King James
William Sadler
Don
Ice Cube
Savon
Art Evans
Bradlee
De'Voreaux White

Lucky

Tierre Turner

Merritt Yohnka

Gerard G. Williams

Bruce A. Young
Raymond
Glenn Plummer
Luther
Stoney Jackson
Wickey
T.E Russell
Video
Tiny Lister
Cletus
John Toles-Bey

Goose

Byron Minns
Moon
Tico Wells
Davis
Hal Landon Inr
Eugene DeLong
James Pickens Inr
Police Officer Reese
L. Warren Young
Police Officer Foley

9,105 feet 101 minutes

East St Louis, Illinois: Goose. a young black gang member, shoots another dead. Watching the sequence on video tape, gang leader King James orders for Goose to be disposed of, and a secluded derelict factory is chosen for the job. In smalltown Arkansas, 200 miles away, fire-fighters Vince and Don are tackling a house blaze. An elderly man breaks free of the flames, delirious, and thrusts some papers into Vince's hands before walking deliberately back into the fire. Vince realises that the old man has given him a newspaper cutting reporting the theft of gold from an East St Louis church 50 years earlier, together with a map pointing to the gold's hiding place in the factory. Determined to find the treasure, Vince and Don drive to Illinois, and following the map's directions, they end up in the building's most secure room. Their treasure hunt is cut short when Vince is attacked by a middle-aged black man, Bradlee, who has made the factory his home. Don pulls him off, and despite Vince's protests, binds him to a chair.

Don and Vince resume the hunt only to stop when they hear Goose and King James' brother Lucky arrive. Don, unseen, follows them onto the roof where a trap is sprung: Goose is confronted by King James and his gang. including Video, who records all the gang's actions on a camcorder. Struck, Goose falls through a skylight. Vince, curious, has left the safe room and witnesses the fall; in turn he is seen by the gang. As the gang moves in on Vince, Don reappears, seizes Lucky and uses him as a shield. In the safe room, Don frisks Lucky, finding drugs, and, as protection against attack, fixes him by his arms to the door. The gang surrounds the building, communicating by mobile phone, while King James sends for Raymond, a fixer who arrives with

powerful weapons and props including a police officer's uniform. He choreographs a mock police bust. Vince, drawn to the window, narrowly misses being hit by one of the gang's marksmen.

Taking stock, King James, for whom Lucky's safety is paramount, orders that nobody should shoot without his command. Don and Vince resume the hunt and find the gold: forgetting their predicament, they rejoice until a catwalk, which had seemed their only escape route, is shot down. Meanwhile, checking out Don's car, Raymond discovers the map and newspaper clipping. Returning to the gang, he is stopped by a police officer, a scene witnessed from the window by Vince, who attempts to cry out. Don quietens him and they fight, while the officer pulls away. Raymond tells Savon, a gang member who throughout has been questioning James' leadership, about the treasure; they agree to keep the information to themselves.

Finding an escape route via a chimney, Don and Vince decide to dope up Lucky. Lucky persuades Don to let him inject himself, but stabs the syringe into Don's neck. Vince and Lucky struggle, until a gang marksman accidentally shoots Lucky dead through the window. James is told and, set on revenge, rushes up to the room, only to be shot by a revived Don, who is killed in return. Savon activates a timer device, designed to burn down the factory. Vince escapes, leaving Bradlee with the loot. Savon discovers him hiding and seizes the gold, but spares his life. Raymond intercepts Savon, but each shoots the other. Finding Vince outside looking at the factory in flames, Bradlee tells him how Don got away with the gold, and advises him to flee from the gang, while he himself walks away with the loot.

beat fix might take from *Trespass* the homily, "We're all the same under the skin" – even if the homogeneity is not the sort we can warm ourselves on. Yet similarity in motivation and reflex is what binds Don and Vince to the black gang when all cultural markers seem to set them apart.

Director Walter Hill likes to reduce



Party out of bounds: William Sadler, De'Voreaux White

characters to basics, and he likes his heroes strong and laconic with just a hint of compassion that often proves a fallibility. Here both King James and Don fit the bill. Indeed, Hill's characters might all be drawn from a western blueprint, although Trespass - originally Looters until the LA riots rendered the title impolitic – is more obviously a meshing of the fashionable gangsterrap genre with an old-style treasure hunt (eg. The Treasure of the Sierra Madre). The set-up is established with economy: the videotaped killing flags the world of drugs and gangs which stands in contrast to the small-town bar in which Don and Vince discuss their trip. It is a contrast which the soundtrack also carries, so that our introduction to the old factory is accompanied by Ry Cooder's adept blending of hints of country with rap's remorseless rhythm. Menace completes Hill's shorthand: during the prelude to the gang's arrival, when we are still clinging onto Don and Vince's treasure hunt story, the camera lingers on each blow of the gold-digging pick-axe with the promise of violence to come.

And it comes, of course - this is, after all, a Walter Hill film (very much so - it bears no evident marks of scriptwriters Gale and Zemeckis). Characters, conforming to the existentialist imperative, make themselves through action. The sides, however, have discrepant resources: the gang is hi-tech, in touch via mobile phones, armed with hugely powerful weapons, in contrast to Don and Vince with their gun and a quaint metal detector. This forms part of Trespass's wider, underlined distinction between an older, downhome America and the ultra-modern, dystopian one. There is a nice divergence in the outside help each turns to: Vince wonders when the police will turn up, while King James calls in arms supplier Raymond. However, beyond the trappings, so the moral goes, both sides are made of the same stuff with, if anything, the clearest signs of any higher motive shown by King James (played with an impressive, loaded poise by Ice-T) who is driven by his concern for Lucky's safety.

The cultural contrasts are overplayed (Don, attempting to convince James of his good faith, asks for a Bible to swear on!), only compounding the flat writing and broadly drawn characters. Initially redeemed by the coherence and pace of the narrative, these failings jar as the taut construction becomes merely mechanical and even sloppy. Action resulting from credible behaviour gives way to plot devices, such as Don unaccountably yielding to Lucky's plea to free his arm, which leads to the bloody finale. This closing sequence, a chain reaction of shootings and pass-the-parcel with the gold, far exceeds the release of any remaining tensions, achieving the action turnover of a hyperactive pop promo. Also shot through by this stage is the film's sureness of tone, with Bradlee's final sauntering off somewhere between justice done and whimsy.

Robert Yates

Used People

USA 1992

Director: Beeban Kidron

Certificate Distributor 20th Century Fox **Production Company** Largo Entertainment **Executive Producers** Lloyd Levin Michael Barnathan Producer Peggy Rajski **Production Supervisor** Jack Roe **Production Co-ordinators** Mara McSweeny Shell Hecht Eddie Ioffredda **Production Managers** David Coatsworth Diana Pokorny **Location Managers** Beth Boigon Andy Cooke Darren Wiseman

Casting Ross Clydesdale **Assistant Directors** Tony Lucibello Walter J. Gasparovic Anne-Marie Ferney Rose Tedesco Mike Samson Michael Ingber Matthew T. Weiner Screenplay

Todd Graff Based on his play The Grandma Plays **Director of Photography** David Watkin Colour

Camera Operators Harald Ortenburger Dick Mingalone **Opticals** Cinema Research Corporation John Tintori

DeLuxe

Production Designer Stuart Wurtzel **Art Directors** Gregory Paul Keen Rick Butler

Set Decorators Hilton Rosemarin Susan Bode **Set Dresser** David Orin Charles

Scenic Artist Mathew Lammerich **Special Effects** Martin Malivoire Doug Graham

Music Rachel Portman **Music Director** David Snell **Music Extracts** "Ha fuggi il traditor",

"Di quella pira", "Questa o quella" **Music Supervisor** Karyn Rachtman

Music Editor Bill Abbott "Tell It Like It Is"

by George Davis, Lee

Diamond, performed

by Aaron Neville;

"I Heard It Through the Grapevine" by Barrett Strong, Norman Whitfield, performed by Marvin Gaye; "Where Are the Words?" by Jack Feldman, Rachel Portman; "It's Not Unusual" by Gordon Mills, Les Reed, performed by Tom Jones; "Grandma Boogie" by Bill Kowalchuk; "Since I Fell for You" by Buddy

Johnson, performed by Lenny Welch; "Monday Monday" by John Phillips, performed by The Mamas and The Papas; "Can't Seem to Make You Mine" by Sky Saxon, performed by The Seeds; "Mrs Robinson" by Paul Simon, performed by Simon & Garfunkel; "Moon Over Miami" by Joe Burke, Edgar Leslie; "The Sky Fell Down" by Louis Alter, Edward Heyman, performed by Tommy Dorsey, Frank Sinatra

Choreography Pat Birch **Costume Design** Marilyn Vance-Straker Wardrobe Supervisors Arthur Rowsell Lisa Lovas Marsha Whitney Jill E. Anderson **Wardrobe Master** Kim Chow **Make-up Artists** Ann Brodie

Suzanne Benoit Katie Bihr **Title Design** R. Greenberg Associates **Supervising Sound Editors** Mark P. Stoeckinger

Wylie Stateman Sound Editors Christopher Assells Dialogue: Stuart Copley Louis Kleinman Ascher Yates Jeff Rosen ADR Supervisor Avram Gold ADR Editor Joe Mayer **Sound Recordists**

Douglas Ganton Tod Maitland Dennis Maitland Kim Maitland Stephen E. Scanlon **ADR Recordists** Tami Treadwell

Dolby stereo **ADR Voices** Mitch Carter Dominic Hoffman Howard Himmelstein Donna Lynn Leavy Enid Kent Richard Minchenberg Nick Miscusi Elisa Pensler Jan Rabson Susan Silo Toby Stone Dennis Tufano Alan Woolf Lynn Anne Zager Sound Re-recordists Sergio Reyes Richard Overton Chris David ADR:

Cast **Shirley MacLaine** Pearl Berman Marcello Mastroianni Joe Meledandri **Bob Dishy** Jack Berman Kathy Bates Bibby Jessica Tandy Freida **Marcia Gay Harden**

Norma

Tommy Goodwin

Stunt Co-ordinator

Film Extract

Glenn H. Randall Jnr

The Graduate (1967)

Mark Maia Filar Rhonda **Irving Metzman** Uncle Al **Matthew Branton** Swee' Pea **David Gow** Bill the Jeweller Sylvia Sidney Becky **Doris Roberts** Aunt Lonnie **Helen Hanft** Aunt Ruthie Jeremy Tracz Cousin Matthew **Stuart Stone** Cousin Stevie Rosario Russo

Theresa

Paolo

Charles Cioffi

Emma Tammi

Asia Vieira

Lee Wallace

Louis Guss

Gil Filar

Uncle Harry

Uncle Normy

Young Bibby

Young Norma

Rose Joe Pantoliano Frank Sam Hutchison Crying Baby Ida Bernardini Aunt Louisa Jane Richardson Joy **Janet Richardson** Carla **Philip Williams** Michael Ricupero Eddie **Genevieve Langlois** French Teacher Luba Goy Nursing Home Staff Member **Dominic Cuzzocrea**

Diane D'Aquila

Rabbi

Priest

Jim Millan

10,441 feet 116 minutes

Stephanie Voves

Girl at Wedding

1946. Queens, New York. Jack Berman returns home. His wife Pearl stands at the stove, complaining about their two young daughters. Jack takes her in his arms and waltzes her about the room. It is the first time they have danced in years. 1969. Family and friends gather at Pearl's apartment after Jack's funeral. Four generations are present. Pearl's elderly mother, Freida, and her friend of six decades, Becky, debate the merits of retiring to Florida. Pearl's daughters keep their distance: Bibby, divorced, overweight, unhappy mother-of-two; and Norma, divorced, glamorous and mentally unstable. Meanwhile Norma's neglected young son Swee' Pea announces that his grandfather has formed a protective force-field around his body, making him invulnerable. Into this eccentric Jewish gathering comes a handsome Italian widower, Joe Meledandri, who says he knew Jack long ago. Joe asks Pearl out on a date and, to her own surprise, she accepts.

Joe takes her to his brother's bar, where he works as a cook. He tells her that this is where he met Jack back in 1946. Berman had been distraught, on the verge of leaving his wife, whom he loved, but who, he said, was dying a little more each day. It was Joe who advised him to go home and dance with her. Later that night he watched from the street as Jack followed his advice, whereupon he fell in love with Pearl. Stunned, Pearl withdraws into herself. Joe continues to pay court over the next weeks, and eventually she allows him to cook for the family. The meal ends badly when an argument between Bibby and her sister gets out of control. Swee' Pea meanwhile demonstrates his invincible strength to Joe's son-in-law, Frank, a psychiatrist, in an apparently death-defying escapade. Frank agrees to see him without his mother's knowledge.

Pearl allows herself to return Joe's affection. Bibby moves with her children to California, to become her own person. Norma confronts her son about his visits to Frank. Swee' Pea runs off and is on the point of jumping from a roof when Joe saves him. Norma and Swee' Pea are reconciled after sharing their pain. Pearl becomes a Meledandri and the Bermans become a family once more.

Beeban Kidron's first Hollywood movie is an engagingly eccentric romantic comedy situated just a few blocks away from Moonstruck. If it is a surprise to find the director of the BBC TV drama Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit and Antonia and Jane plunging into the brittle, bustling world of Queens, tackling three generations of New York-Jewish womanhood, then it could be that Used People is less the director's movie than screenwriter Todd Graff's. Certainly this is an impressively written film, bristling with smart one-liners and put-downs ("Jews don't swim - you can't eat at the same time"). Marcello Mastroianni, in a gift of a role, relishes Joe's learning and eloquence, quoting Emerson and Shakespeare at the drop of a hat, and courting Pearl with a poetic ardour that Cyrano would envy: "I saw a woman haunted by the ghost of her own grace, and I fell hopelessly, and pointlessly, in love" (admittedly, he's had 20 years to come up with the speech, and the accent helps too).

As the insecure object of his desire, Shirley MacLaine gives us the flip side of all those cranky exhibitionists she's played of late: Pearl is the quintessential 'ordinary housewife', virtually sleepwalking through life, her face a mask of stoicism. Of course, MacLaine plays 'down' with the intensity others would bring to a Tennessee Williams' heroine; this Pearl is a volcano of restraint. The tension works well, and the film clearly works to give Pearl her due. But it is still difficult to understand what Joe sees in her.

Kidron makes a fair stab at catching the mood of the times (there's a delightful sequence tied in to the first moon landing), and juggles the other characters confidently enough. She's particularly sharp on bitchy social gatherings – although Graff's increasingly discursive script often seems to be on the verge of falling apart. Idiosyncratic casting hardly helps: Jessica Tandy as an unlikely Jewish grandmother; Kathy Bates and Marcia Gay Harden as MacLaine's daughters. Norma's fixation on movie idols is never remotely plausible, but Harden has fun dressing up as Holly Golightly, as Bonnie Parker – she works in a bank - and, most memorably, as Mrs Robinson for a hilarious seduction scene that smacks of the movie-inspired sex in Antonia and Jane. It is typical of the picture that Kidron should reap such comic capital out of the fault-lines in this unhappy family, but singularly fail to put over the pat sit-com resolutions supplied by Graff. Kathy Bates in particular is weighed down with selfconscious platitudes about discovering herself, while Tandy pitches in with her two cents' worth: "Don't wait until you're 80 to learn how precious life is." It's a perfunctory conclusion to a lively and expansive movie.

Tom Charity

Wind

USA 1992

Director: Carroll Ballard

Certificate Distributor Entertainment **Production Companies** Filmlink International/ The Wind Production Committee **Executive Producers** Francis Ford Coppola Fred Fuchs Producers Mata Yamamoto Tom Luddy **Associate Producer** Betsy Pollock **Production Controller** Cynthia Quan **Production Co-ordinators** Jennie Crowley Stel Deleon Andrew Loo Karen Snizik Alvarez Lisa Matsukawa. **Production Managers** Diana Phillips Grant Hill **Unit Managers** Tam Halling Richard Kornaat **Location Managers** Robin Clifton Brownie Warburton Arlene Sibley Post-production Supervisor John A. Amicarella Post-production Co-ordinator Francey Grace Casting Linda Phillips Palo **Assistant Directors** L. Dean Jones Drew Rosenberg Brendan Campbell Sarah Lewis Colin Fletcher Screenplay Rudy Wurlitzer Mac Gudgeon Jeff Benjamin Roger Vaughan Kimball Livingston Director of Photography John Toll Colour/Prints Technicolor 2nd Unit Photography Gary Capo **Aerial Photography** Stan McClain Camera Operator Bill Trautvetter Opticals Pacific Title Graphics Vicki Longbottom Animated Sequences: Animation Research Unit Michael Chandler **Production Designer** Laurence Eastwood Art Directors Nick Bonham Paul W. Gorfine Roger S. Crandall Set Decorators Richard Hobbs Bobbie Frankel Brian Lives Scenic Artists Suzy Abbott Sophie Carhian Diane Laurienzo J. Chad Davis Cliff Davis

Models Russ Ruskins Mike Meldrum Mario Miralles John Nuebell Music/Music Director Basil Poledouris **Music Extract** "Madame Butterfly" by Giacomo Puccini. performed by Veronika Kincscs, Peter Dvorsky, The Hungarian State Opera Chamber Chorus and Orchestra **Orchestrations** Greg McRitchie Music Editor Jeffrey Stephens **Music Consultant** Bones Howe "My Baby Let Me Down" by and performed by Lucky Oceans; "A Dream

Comes Back To You"

by Wendy Waldman.

Basil Poledouris,

Wendy Waldman

Wardrobe Supervisors

Kerry Thompson

Deborah Holbrook

Deirdre Williams

Sharon Ilson

Pacific Title

Sound Design

Alan Splet

Sound Editors

Frank Eulner

Patrick Dodd

Ann Kroeber

John Verbeck

Jeffrey Kroeber

Hugh Waddell

ADR Supervisor

David Bergad

Drew Kunin

Tim Boyle

Leslie Shatz

Alan Splet

Music:

Sound Recordists

Sound Re-recordists

Marian Wallace

Ernie Fosselius

Stant Co-ordinators

Chris Anderson

Arch Roberts

Salling Doubles

Peter Gilmour

Skip Lissiman

Trevor Hellier

Lisa Blackaller

Bob Campbell

Dave Pearce

James Harke

Luke Devine

Sailing Master

Peter Gilmour

Joe Krawzcyk

Boat Wranglers

Gert Jacoby

Ross Bridekirk

Boat Co-ordinators

Jessie Kendall-Kerr

Steve Burt

Adrienne Cahalan

Michael Dunbar

eff Watts

Ewa Sztompke-Oatfield

Kirsten Veysey

Felicity Bowing

performed by

Costume Design

Marit Allen

Make-up

Jennifer Grey Kate Bass Cliff Robertson Morgan Weld Jack Thompson Jack Neville Stellan Skarsgard loe Heiser Rebecca Miller Abigail Weld **Ned Vaughn** Charley Moore **Peter Montgomery** TV Commentator Elmer Ahlwardt Sarge Saylor Creswell Butler James Rebhorn George Michael Higgins Artemus Ron Colbin Tad Ken Kensei

Cast

Matthew Modine

Will Parker

Tom Fervoy Ron Palillo Топу **Matt Malloy** Lyle Mark Walsh Spider Kim Sheridan Rubsey Bruce Epke Sheik Sean Leonard Mooney Tom Darling Otis John Sangmeister Stewart Silvestri Tuck Jay Brown Hook Mark McTeigue

Mark Richards

Bruno

Billy Bates

Will wins the race, and is promptly seclusion, refuses to help him, but Weld's daughter Abigail, with whom Will is now having an affair, agrees to fund the project.

With the boat near completion, Will reunites his old crew. Together, they head to Freemantle, Australia, to try to retrieve the Cup from Neville. In the penultimate race, the two boats collide. Will, rather than win a hollow victory, admits he was at fault and concedes the race. In the final leg, dead calm weather leaves the two yachts stranded halfway round the course. Kate, who is again Will's tactician, manages to find some wind, and the American boat, the Geronimo, takes a substantial lead. After a crew member has a near-fatal accident, Geronimo is overtaken. The Americans are lagging behind and as a last resort use their secret weapon, a 'Whomper' sail designed by Kate. This helps them make up lost ground. The Australians cheat, spiking a hole in the sail as the two boats are tacking side by side. Again, they take the lead. With the finishing line in sight, Geronimo fakes a tack and manages to edge ahead, eventually winning by a short nose. After celebrating the victory, Will realizes he is still in love with Kate, and the couple are reunited.

In 1983, yacht skipper Dennis Conner contrived to mislay a piece of sporting silverware that had been in his country's possession for nigh on 140 years, and actually went under the proprietary name of the America's Cup. Seeing Alan Bond scuttle back to Australia with the trophy was quite as big a blow to national pride as it was to lose the World Series to the Toronto Blue Jays. Fortunately, in the way of the best American heroes, Conner had the gumption to go down under four years later and reclaim the prize. His bestselling book Comeback, My Race for the America's Cup is the inspiration for Carroll Ballard's film, which charts this minor sporting triumph with exemplary vim, somehow managing to ignore the fact that the America's Cup often seems less a sporting occasion than a celebration of class, privilege and preppy East Coast wealth: sailing hardly ranks with, say, boxing as the stuff of popular Hollywood fable. Still, it is to Ballard and his screenwriters' credit that they manage to fashion such intractable material into an exhilarating movie, albeit one which sometimes risks becoming an old-fashioned paean to outdoor heroism of the Hemingway variety.

Francis Coppola, Ballard's old UCLA classmate, is Wind's executive producer, and the picture shares his portly sense of grandeur and spectacle. It is firmly in the tradition of Zoetrope, where the dream is what matters. Just as Coppola's Tucker had a revolutionary vision for the American motorcar, Will Parker and his colleagues are obsessed with building a new kind of yacht. And, as you'd expect, financiers are the villains: the idealists have to wrest their dreams from the fists of dour, self-interested big business, here represented by Cliff Robertson's craggy millionaire. A latterday Croesus who believes he can spend his way to the Cup, Weld lives on a mansion house atop a hill as if testing for a remake of Citizen Kane. He is the bitter self-made man, the reactionary who thinks the country has gone soft, and who sees the initial loss of the Cup as a symptom of national decline.

With Ballard, visuals are in the ascendant. His reputation lies in his ability to take fairly humdrum stories and pep them up with spectacular location photography. His The Black Stallion, for instance, started life as a cutesy kids' tale, but was transformed into a poetic fable, beautiful to look at and with a ponderous philosophical undertow. Here, he accomplishes something similar with 12-metre yachts. TV coverage of sailing is hamstrung by the fact that boats can only be observed at a distance, and seem to move at snail's pace. Ballard, however, was able to take his crew aboad ship, and what Leni Riefenstahl did for athletics in Olympia, he does here for yachting; slow motion, fast motion, hand-held shots, underwater and aerial photography combine to ensure that the race footage, which was filmed simultaneously by three units, is riveting.

On shore, matters are less well handled. The camaraderie and jingoism soon begin to grate, as does the attempt to create a documentary feel. Although Kate's introduction to the crew helps ease the Boy's Own feel, the hunky sailors in their waterproofs look like fugitives from cigarette or cola ads. There is no disguising that this is a triumphal narrative, where the resilient All-American boy with a philosophical streak, and an almost British lack of ruthlessness, ends by winning both race and girl.

Fortunately, between races, Wind broadens its canvas, taking in locations other than Newport and Freemantle. Much of the film is set in the desert, where Will and his friends strive to design the perfect boat in a Utah aircraft hanger. These scenes, evocative of Ford's West, or of the crazy beatnik visionary seeking inspiration in the wilderness, have a resonance which the rest of the action lacks. Screenwriter Rudy Wurlitzer, whose credits include Pat Garrett and Bllly the Kid and Voyager, explores the ambiguities in the make-up of the modern American hero, trying to give the film a social and political context in the process. As he notes, "part of the fabric of the film and the tension between the characters is the theme of class struggle between people who earn their money and people who inherit their money." He is helped by a typically quizzical leading performance from Matthew Modine, but is only fitfully successful: in the end, the characters' dilemmas, dreams and romances are secondary to the movie's main theme, which is to flaunt the Stars and Stripes, and to mark yet another sporting footnote in American history. Who cares where the money comes from as long as the America's Cup stays where it belongs?

Geoffrey Macnab



Hot air: Matthew Modine, Jennifer Grey

Cat Swami Bill Buell 11,299 feet 126 minutes Danny Newport, 1983. Will Parker, a young sailor, is called in by millionaire yachting enthusiast Morgan Weld to skipper the reserve boat as Weld prepares to defend the America's Cup against Australian challengers. During the summer, Will's girlfriend Kate Bass arrives to take part alongside Will in a dinghy race, where one of their opponents is Australian skipper Jack Neville. Although Will and Kate crash out of the race. Will realises Kate has a ruthlessness and acumen he lacks. He therefore invites her to be his tactician in the trial race against Weld.

promoted to Weld's main boat Radiance. He has the opportunity to take part in the America's Cup, but is told Kate can't be part of his crew. Although he resents this decision, he abides by it, and Kate leaves him. In her absence, he makes a mistake in the final America's Cup race which allows Neville to win the trophy. Shattered by his failure, Will gives up yachting. He sets off to find Kate, who is now living in the Utah desert with aircraft designer Joe Heiser. She doesn't seem pleased to see Will again; however, he and Joe strike up a rapport, and Will soon inveigles Joe into trying to design a boat to recapture the Cup. Progress is stunted by lack of sponsorship. Will approaches Weld for money; his old benefactor, who is living in curmudgeonly

Storyboard Artist

Andrew Mayhew

Special Effects

David Hardie

Brian Cox

Wittgenstein

Cast

United Kingdom 1993

Certificate

Director: Derek Jarman

Distributor **Production Companies** Channel 4/BFI In association with Uplink A Bandung production **Executive Producers** Ben Gibson Takashi Asai **Executive in Charge** of Production Eliza Mellor Producer Tariq Ali **Associate Director** Ken Butler **Production Managers** Anna Campeau Gina Marsh **Assistant Directors** Davina Nicholson Richard Hewitt Screenplay Derek Jarman Terry Eagleton Ken Butler Director of Photography James Welland In colour Editor **Budge Tremlett Art Director** Annie Lapaz Scenic Artist Matthew Parsons Jan Latham-Koenig Music performed by Piano: Jan Latham Koenig Violin: Paul Barritt Flute: Judith Hall **Costume Design** Sandy Powell Wardrobe Supervisor

Penny Beard

Morag Ross

Sound Editor

Toby Calder

Dolby stereo

Paul Carr

Sound Recordists

George Richards

Andre Jacquemin

Sound Re-recordist

Make-up

Music:

Karl Johnson Ludwig Wittgenstein Michael Gough Bertrand Russell Tilda Swinton Ottoline Morrell John Quentin Maynard Keynes **Kevin Collins** Johnny **Clancy Chassay** Young Ludwig Wittgenstein Jill Balcon Leopoldine Wittgenstein Sally Dexter Hermine Wittgenstein Gina Marsh Gretyl Wittgenstein Vanya del Borgo Helene Wittgenstein Ben Scantlebury Hans Wittgenstein **Howard Sooley** Kurt Wittgenstein David Radzinowicz Rudolf Wittgenstein Jan Latham-Koenig Paul Wittgenstein Tony Peake Michelle Wade Tanya Wade Roger Cook Anna Campeau Mike O'Pray Tutors Nabil Shaban Martian **Donald McInnes** Hairdresser **Aisling Magill** Schoolgirl Lynn Seymour Lydia Lopokova **Ashley Russell Stewart Bennett David Mansell** Steven Downes Peter Fillingham Fayez Samare Students Samantha Cones **Kate Temple** Sarah Graham Cyclists

Layla Alexander Garrett

Sophia Janovskaya

6,750 feet

75 minutes

The young Ludwig Wittgenstein, announcing himself as "a prodigy", introduces us to his Viennese family, describes the rigours of his Austrian education, and debates philosophical questions with a Martian. His intellectual talents take him initially to England where, at Manchester University, he studies Engineering. He quickly transfers to Philosophy at Cambridge, where he is befriended and encouraged in his radically original philosophical ideas by Bertrand Russell who, writing to his mistress Lady Ottoline Morrell, proclaims him the most gifted philosopher of his generation.

Wittgenstein leaves Cambridge to journey first to Norway where, in seclusion, he begins to write his Notes on Logic, then back to Austria, where he informs his family he intends to volunteer for the army. His sister Hermione regards the decision as stupid; his brother Paul is encouraged to join up with him. During World War I, Paul

loses an arm and Ludwig begins work on what will become the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. On returning home he decides to delay his return to Cambridge by taking up a provincial teaching post, further angering Hermione who insists that he is wasting his talents. Ludwig experiences the elementary school as deeply frustrating and is forced to leave after being accused of brutality towards his students.

His return to Cambridge is facilitated by the offer of a teaching post and a grant arranged by the Professor of Economics John Maynard Keynes. Wittgenstein, however, finds it frustratingly difficult to relate his ideas to his students, and seeks solace in daily visits to the local cinema. He is accompanied by his friend Johnny, a young philosophy student who is also Maynard Keynes' lover. Wittgenstein and Johnny begin a relationship, during which the philosopher attempts to persuade the student to relinquish his studies in favour of the more 'honest' world of manual labour. Russell and Keynes reprimand him for influencing a young man whose working-class background meant that his parents underwent great sacrifices to educate their son at Cambridge. Wittgenstein attempts to leave Cambridge to work as a factory labourer in Soviet Russia, but the Soviet authorities offer him instead a choice of two University posts. He returns to Cambridge in 1951 where he is diagnosed as suffering from cancer of the prostate. After a last voyage, this time to Ireland, he returns to Cambridge to die, where he is attended at his deathbed by Maynard Keynes and the Martian.

Originally conceived as part of a Channel Four series on philosophers to include films on Spinoza and Locke, Wittgenstein – shot in two weeks and for less than £300,000 – takes Jarman's characteristic exquisite minimalism to a new extreme. The already reduced mise en scène of Edward II is here further contracted to a series of lush colour tableaux on a depthless pitch-black background.

This refusal of depth and, by consequence, of any realist visual perspective, while making a telling virtue of economic necessity, is a visual strategy in keeping with the film's agenda. For it becomes increasingly clear that at one prominent level Wittgenstein is a disquisition on the futility of dramatizing the life behind the work, an extended Brechtian parody of biopic conventions.

The insistent dedramatization comes across particularly in the film's use of spare sets and anti-realistic costumes, a single prop becoming the motif of a particular period or place. Vienna becomes a group portrait around a grand piano; and Cambridge a group of students seated in deckchairs around a blackboard – English gentlemen-philosophers sunning themselves in the light of the imported mittel-European eccentric. This latterday Brechtianism might also derive from the fact that the film's first draft

was the work of Marxist academic Terry Eagleton. In studiedly distancing itself from the Minnelli/Van Gogh paradigm of the biopic (attempting at all costs to avoid becoming Lust for Logic). Wittgenstein toys with the standard characterization of the Genius as Romantic Outsider, personally and professionally misunderstood, and identifies melancholia and torment as the wellsprings of creativity.

Actors 'quote' their parts; Bertrand Russell played as an amiable loungelizard academic. Maynard Keynes as a stiff-spined manipulator of the Old Boys Network and Lady Ottoline Morrell as brittle, charming bitch aristo ciphers all. But the holding of the biopic tendencies at arm's length results in a curious lack of conviction. This conflict of formal strategy and latent content is particularly emphasised by moments when the starkness works towards either a visually expressive effect - the retreat to Norway given with beautiful economy, a single lantern and a dappling light on the boatside; or to accentuate a character trait - Ludwig's disastrous spell as a teacher at a provincial Austrian primary school, when the camera closes in on the faces of the impotently raging teacher and his terrified pupil. The fact that this sequence returns as the single flashback in the film, to accompany the philosopher's repeated, agonised refrain of "Do you understand me?", is an internal recognition that it packs the film's only powerfully dramatic punch.

Wittgenstein also represents a continuation of Jarman's highly personal Grand Tour through the mausoleum of European High Culture. But whether the cultural model is literary (Shakepeare, Marlowe), painterly (Caravaggio) or philosophical, Jarman's fascination remains in his isolating and reinterpreting the marginal inscriptions of class and sexuality in culture. Wittgenstein, while something of a curio, is a further development of this sustained cinematic reading of cultural history 'against the grain'. The film's central thesis concerns the philosopher's masochistic faith in material reality, in the 'everyday' as superior to "the poison of the mind" that his philosophical vocation represents and this is investigated partly through his sexuality, but largely through class.

Surprisingly, Jarman never really exploits the visual possibilities of the engineer-turned-philosopher's sanal activities, which included building two houses. These adventures, as well as his Tolstoyesque communions with nature, his mistaken attempt to defect to Soviet Russia and his enlistment in World War I, are presented as acts of classic bourgeois bad faith, arising from a sense of class shame. He is accused of such by both Maynard Keynes and Russell, who are presented as comfortably socially integrated. This complex of issues crystallises around the character of Johnny, a rough-trade cipher and the lover of both Maynard Keynes and Wittgenstein. The philosopher's repeated attempts to dissuade Johnny from continuing his studies in favour of the more "authentic" life of manual work provokes both Keynes and Russell, who justify their angry disagreement in the name of the sacrifices of Johnny's working-class family. That the philosopher is simply unable to comprehend this argument demonstrates the extent to which each of the three characters regard Johnny as a tabula rasa: Keynes and Russell projecting onto him their own feelings and attitudes of, respectively, desire and paternalist patronage: Wittgenstein affectionately incorporating the young man into his own schema of self-hate and self-delusion.

The irony that the film constantly points up is that Wittgenstein's philosophical brilliance (the maxims here are deliberately tossed about like so many after-dinner bons mots) is less a condition of his acceptance in Cambridge than the tacit understanding that he is - however much he kicks against it – of the same class as Russell and Keynes. At the philosopher's deathbed, Keynes offers a poetic homily that collapses the contradictions of his character into two elemental images; Wittgenstein as constantly pulled between "the ice world" of logic and "the earth" of material reality. Abetted by its own icy formalism, the film never really touches the earth of its character.

Chris Darke



RE-RELEASE

Mean Streets

USA 1973

Director: Martin Scorsese Certificate Distributor Electric **Production Company** Warner Bros A Taplin-Perry-Scorsese production **Executive Producer** E. Lee Perry Producer Jonathan T. Taplin. **Production Co-ordinators** Peter Fain 2nd Unit: David Osterhout **Production Manager** Paul Rapp Post-production Co-ordinator Sandra Weintraub **Assistant Directors** Russell Vreeland Ron Satloff Screenplay Martin Scorsese Mardik Martin Story Martin Scorsese Director of Photography Kent Wakeford Colour Technicolor **Additional Photography** Norman Gerard Camera Operator Gene Talvin Editor Sid Levin **Visual Consultant** David Nichols Special Effects Bill Bales Music/Songs "Jumpin' Jack Flash", "Tell Me (You're Coming Back)" by Mick Jagger. Keith Richards, performed by the Rolling Stones; "I Love You So" by Sonny Norton, Morris Leavy, performed by The Chantells; "Addio sogni di Gloria" by Carlos Innocenzi, Marcella Rivi, "Canta per' me" by Ernesto de Curtis, Libero Borio, "Munasteria di Santa Chiara" by Alberto Barberis, Michel Galdieri. performed by Giuseppe de Stefano; "Marruzella" by Renato Carosone. Enzo Bonagura, "Scapricciatiello" by Ferdinando Albano, Pacifico Vento performed by Renato Carosone: "Please Mr Postman" by W. Garrett, G. Dobbins, F. Gorman, B. Bert, performed by The Marvelettes; "Hideaway" by Freddie King, Sonny Thompson, "I Looked Away" by Eric Clapton, Bobby Whitlock, performed by Eric Clapton: "Desiree" by Nick Curinga, Leslie Cooper, Clarence Johnson, performed by The Charts; "Rubber Biscuit" by Charles Johnson, performed by The Chips; "Pledging My Love"

performed by Little Caesar and The Romans: "I Met Him on a Sunday" by Shirley Owens, Addie Harris, Doris Clay. performed by The Shirelles; "Be My Baby" by Phil Spector, Jeff Barry, Ellie Greenwich, performed by The Ronettes; "Mickey's Monkey" by Holland, Dozier, Holland, performed by The Miracles: "Marcia Reale" by G. Gabetti; "The Star Spangled Banner" by Francis Scott Key: "A Tazza E Cafe" by Vittorio Fassone, Giuseppe Capaldo; "Shoop Shoop Song (It's In His Kiss)" by Rudy Clark; "Facetta Nera" by R. Micheli, M. Ruccione; "Baby Oh Baby' by Hiram Johnson, Walter Coleman, Nathan Bouknight; "Tomb of Ligeia" by Kenneth V. Jones; "O Marenariello" by G. Ottaviano, Gambardella; "Home Sweet Home" by J. Howard Payne, Henry R. Bishop Wardrobe Norman Salling **Clothing Consultant**

Cornelia McNamara

Consolidated Film

Sound Re-recordists

John K. Wilkinson

Bud Grenzbach

Walter Goss

Sound Effects

Titles/Opticals

Industries

Sound Recordist

Don Johnson

Angel Editorial Stunt Co-ordinator Bill Katching Cast Harvey Keitel Charlie Robert De Niro Johnny Boy David Proval **Amy Robinson** Teresa **Richard Romanus** Michael Cesare Danova Giovanni Victor Argo Mario Robert Carradine Assassin Jeannie Bell Diane D'Mitch Davis Cop **David Carradine** Drunk in Tony's Bar George Memmoli **Murray Mosten** Oscar Ken Sinclair Sammy Harry Northup Soldier Lois Walden Jewish Girl **Lenny Scaletta** Jimmy Robert Wilder Benton **Martin Scorsese** Car Gunman Dino Seragusa Old Man Peter Fain George Julie Andleman Girl at Party Jaime Alba Ken Konstantin Young Boys Nicki "Ack" Aquilino

Man on Docks

B. Mitchell Reed

10,064 feet

112 minutes

1973, Little Italy. Tony throws a drug addict out of his bar, Michael oversees the importation of unlicensed foreign goods, Johnny Boy throws firecrackers into mail boxes and Charlie considers his personal morality in church. In Tony's bar, Charlie remonstrates with Johnny Boy about his debts; later Charlie assures Michael that Johnny Boy will pay up. Charlie visits Oscar's restaurant and reports back to Giovanni, his powerful mobster uncle, that Oscar is unable to make his payments. The next day, at the bar, Tony rows with Johnny Boy. After peace is restored by Charlie, a young man shoots a drunk in the toilet. Michael, Johnny Boy and Charlie drive away from the incident before the police arrive. Johnny Boy and Charlie return to Charlie's place where the latter fantasises about Johnny Boy's cousin Teresa, with whom he is having a clandestine affair. Later, at Giovanni's, Charlie overhears a conversation between him and the father of the boy involved in the shooting incident. Charlie goes with Teresa to the coast and tries to explain why he always helps Johnny Boy out.

In the bar Charlie makes a date with Diane, a black dancer, but is too concerned about his position in the Italian community to keep it. At Oscar's restaurant, which is being handed over to Charlie, Giovanni warns him to keep away from Johnny Boy and from Teresa, who is epileptic. Back home, Charlie tries unsuccessfully to back out of his relationship with her. Later, while talking with his uncle. Charlie is interrupted by Michael, who has had enough of Johnny Boy's irresponsible behaviour. Charlie reassures him, and they agree to meet later and put pressure on Johnny Boy. At a party at Tony's bar to celebrate a friend's homecoming from Vietnam, Charlie gets drunk but is sobered up by Michael's threats to teach Johnny Boy a lesson. Teresa arrives to let Charlie know that Johnny Boy is on the roof of an adjacent building with a gun. Charlie takes the gun from him and they cool off in a nearby cemetery. Michael harasses Teresa about Johnny Boy and she and Charlie talk it over. Johnny Boy sees them together and fights with Charlie, which causes Teresa to have a fit. Charlie and Johnny Boy are reconciled, but Charlie refuses to talk to his uncle on Johnny Boy's behalf. In Tony's bar, Charlie and Johnny Boy meet Michael; Johnny Boy is abusive and pulls a gun on him. Charlie borrows Tony's car to take Johnny Boy away from the heat for a few days. On the way he picks up Teresa and the three get hopelessly lost trying to exit New York. Michael catches up with them and his hired thug shoots them all. Charlie and Teresa are helped into an ambulance while Johnny Boy collapses. fatally wounded in the neck.

So much has been written about Mean Streets since its release that task of reviewing is not easy. The celebrated use of hand-held cam-

era in tracking shots - especially during the bar brawl; the integration of the music score with the lives of the characters; the naturalistic style; the tour de force acting; comparisons with The Godfather; the vigour of the direction; the use of quotation - all have exhaustively commented on. Mean Streets does not need to be reassessed in these terms - its pivotal place in movie history is guaranteed. And, as if by design, the re-release of Scorsese's movie has coincided with the UK release of Reservoir Dogs. inevitably inviting comparison (not good for Reservoir Dogs). The heavyhanded way in which Tarantino deals with the subjects of racism, loyalty and friendship makes Reservoir Dogs appear ponderous, whereas the violence seeping through Mean Streets renders it at once more threatening and more watchable than the in-theface style of its 1993 counterpart.

But these metacinematic discussions often leave the film itself behind. Watching Mean Streets again, I enjoyed it more than when I first saw it. I was struck by its warmth and watched indulgently as the boys brawled, got drunk, sparred with each other and generally got up to no good. Those streets are not so mean, and even the ending comes across almost like a prank gone wrong. But, as with all Scorsese movies, that's not the end of it. The characterisation is complex, centring on the character of Charlie (Harvey Keitel) who is struggling semiarticulately with the conflicting codes of church, Mafia and friendship/love. His desire to 'help' Johnny Boy may be motivated by friendship, it may be a Christian act, but it may also be that Charlie wants to act out the Godfather role for which he so ardently admires his uncle Giovanni.

This is the central trilemma which brings about Johnny Boy's breakdown - for that is what it is - and which Charlie finally fails to resolve. It is Scorsese's master stroke that he takes us through the movie with Charlie, never outside or against him, by means of close-up shots of Keitel's wide-eyed, innocent features. In his later films, especially GoodFellas, the moral confusion is still there, but Scorsese has stepped back from it, perhaps tired of its irresolvable nature. This makes the later movies colder and less appealing; the difference is that of being inside or outside a dream.

20 years on, in a new 35mm print, Mean Streets still has the power to disturb and move. There can be few moments in movie history more thrilling than when the Ronettes break into "Be My Baby" as Keitel wakes up, shakes off his Catholic guilt and dresses for the day. By the time the Rolling Stones' "Jumpin' Jack Flash" is heard, as the camera winds towards Charlie sitting at the end of Tony's infernal bar, the headiness is as intense as any artificial high. From its opening sequences, Mean Streets creates a buzz which takes you up and never sets you down.

Jill McGreal

Shorts

The Attendant

United Kingdom 1992 Director: Isaac Julien

Certificate Not yet issued Distributor **Production Company** A Normal production Channel 4 Producer

Mark Nash **Production Manager** Esther Johnson **Assistant Directors** Orson Nava Johann Insanally Director of Photography Nina Kellgren In colour & B/W

Editors Robert Hargreaves James Bygrave **Production Designer** Mick Hurd Storyboard Artist John Hewitt Music Gary Butcher

limmy Somerville **Costume Design** Annie Curtis Jones Make-up Tammy Harewood

Sound Design Trevor Mathison Edward George Sound Re-recording Raja Sehgal **Music Consultant** Johnny T

Cast **Thomas Baptiste** Attendant Cleo Sylvestre Conservator John Wilson Visitor Paul Bernstock Roy Brown **Andy Denys** Stuart Hall Hugo Irwin **Christian Jones Deighton Kavarne** Hanif Kureishi **Edward Lam Keith Lennon** Mike Phillips Norman Rosenthal **Justin Saunders** Thelma Speirs **Neal Weisman** Players **Timothie Biggs** Sebastian Fenton Johnny T

640 feet 8 minutes

Quartet

Shirley Thompson

The camera pans in on a nineteenth-cenutry painting of black slaves in chains, 'Scene on the Coast of Africa'. In a museum, the Attendant inspects a visitor's bag; the Attendant is then seen on a stage singing; black and white men are seen in an erotic cabaret and a woman slowly claps her gloved hands. A male visitor in leather enters, carrying a black leather bag; he smiles at the Attendant; an angel in leather shorts flies out and circles his head. The Attendant smiles back and an angel in white circles his head.

The visitors leave the museum, except for the man in leather, who smiles at the image of a man's crotch in gold shorts. The painting of the slaves comes alive with men in an SM scene; they turn to look as the Attendant walks by. The next painting shows four men in a similar scene with the Visitor at the centre, holding a riding crop. The Attendant is seen face down, with the visitor standing over him holding a whip. A female Conservator puts her ear to the wall and hears a gay porn soundtrack. The Visitor lies face down, with the Attendant holding the whip. The Attendant descends the stairs and kisses the Conservator. The camera returns to the erotic tableau seen previously; angels fly around the theatre; and the film ends with a closeup of the black man in the centre of the tableau.

A far cry from the earnest proselytising of Young Soul Rebels, The Attendant could be seen as marking Isaac Julien's late entry into the New Queer Cinema club. Poignantly explor-

by Don D. Robey,

Ferdinand Washington,

performed by Johnny

Ace: "Ritmo Sabroso"

by Ray Barretto, Louis

Ramirez, performed

by Ray Barretto; "You"

by Dave Goddard, Larry

Vannata performed by

The Aquatones; "Ship

performed by The

by The Paragons.

Nutmegs; "Florence"

by Paul Winley, Julius

McMichaels, performed

"Malafemmina" by Toto,

performed by Jimmy

Roselli; "Those Oldies

But Goodies" by Nick

Curinga, Paul Politi,

of Love" by Leroy Griffin.

ing the power of the erotic imagination, it displays as much wit, style and perversity in its "queer eight minutes" as you're likely to find in the existing queer canon.

While the white boys are looking to make a virtue out of sexual outlawry. Julien takes a more cautious view of transgressive sexuality, focussing on the rituals of gay sado-masochism as seen from a black perspective. While there is enormous pleasure to be derived from the narrative ploy whereby images of 'deviant' sexuality come to life (a joke at the expense of right-wing politicians who express fears over Mapplethorpe's "dangerous" representations, perhaps?), the images themselves provoke a different set of anxieties. If the museum setting provides a suitably seasoned environment for the staging of sado-masochistic rituals, it also implies a discomfiting historical background to these particular power-plays. As much as we might want to forget it, the original painting of black slaves in chains echoes throughout the film. The choice of drawings in the hyper-macho style of artist Tom of Finland as backdrops to the Attendant's fantasies only serves to underline the director's ambivalence; as Julien has pointed out previously, he is not, nor is he likely ever to be, one of

For all the queer fun and trouble it has to offer. The Attendant is still a soberly 'difficult' film. Insofar as a passion for historical revisionism can be judged a true test of New Queer Cinema, Julien lets us know that he's only queer by half. Some histories are simply a lot harder to revise than others.

Paul Burston

"Tom's men".

Now That It's Morning

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Neil Bartlett

Certificate Not yet issued Distributor

Production Company Esta's Television Company In association with Gloria British Screen Channel 4

Producers Esta Charkham Simon Mellor **Production Manager** Jim Allan

Casting Sue Needleman **Assistant Directors** Jon Older Simon Haveland Screenplay

Neil Bartlett Director of Photography Nina Kellgren Colour

Technicolor Editor Alan Knight **Production Designer** Ken Sharp

Bloomfield, Neil Bartlett, performed by Sonia Jones Costume Design James Gardiner Wardrobe Gilly Hebden Make-up Teresa Kelly Plume Partners Sound Editor

Patrick O'Neil

Sound Recordists

Steve Phillips

Richard King

"Now That It's

Morning" by Nicolas

Cast **Malcolm Sinclair** Gerald **Nicholas Pickard** Tristram Jellinek Maitre D' **Edward Hibbert** Binky Nicolas Bloomfield Bunny

990 feet 11 minutes

Miss Regina Fong

Drag Queen

18 November 1961. The clock strikes 8 a.m. as 15-year-old lan picks up the telephone to wish his



Twang! Christian Jones in 'The Attendant'

lover Gerald a happy birthday. Gerald tells him that he has arranged a surprise and will pick Ian up from school late in the afternoon; Gerald is keen to show off his young lover in his brand new Jaguar.

From the school grounds, Gerald whisks lan off to Chez Maurice, a private club where a soirée is in progress celebrating Gerald's forty-fifth birthday. Upstairs, the Maitre D' wishes Gerald a happy birthday and frostily greets the under-aged Ian. None of Gerald's friends have met his teenaged lover. As the besuited Bunny and Binky whisper disapprovingly to each other, Gerald becomes reckless in his cups and to stave off further damage, the owner calls drag artist Miss Regina Fong out for her number.

But Miss Fong's rendition of the song 'Now That It's Morning' is interrupted by Gerald who, determined to answer the gossips, introduces lan to the party, sets them right about the age difference, and then accidentally cuts his hand. The party, as the Maitre D' announces, is over and Regina, lan and Gerald flee Chez Maurice in the Jaguar. Ian drives through the night to Brighton where the three watch the dawn rise in a roadside cafe. Regina coaxes lan in to declaring his love for Gerald as she plays the title song from the juke-box and the lovers enfold each other in a romantic embrace.

Until Queer Cinema signalled the arrival of a new cinematic language to express gay romance, filmakers had often struggled with love stories mired in kitsch or frayed with self-hatred. Neil Bartlett's Now That It's Morning is an intriguing example of how well-worn scenarios can be rewritten to describe Queer emotions. In this case, Bartlett focuses on the tortured relationship between a closeted middle-aged businessman and his pubescent boyfriend. He recreates a pre-Wolfenden London where gay men congregate in claustrophobic 'private' clubs but never dream of kissing in public, and sets it against a determinedly happy ending.

The danger involved in their relationship is explicit from the start: their conversation is conducted sotto voce so that lan's parents won't overhear them. A series of tight close-ups of Ian getting

ready for school, the telephone and a pocket watch underscores the difficulty of the lovers' situation. Even at school, Ian looks on Gerald's spanking new Jaguar with anxiety and delight. To be seen together so publicly is a daring, even criminal act.

At Chez Maurice, the wine-red curtains, baroque flower bouquets and dim lighting suggest a virtual closet where Gerald's closest friends pass bitchy comments on his relationship. "He's very, very dear but seen from the outside," whispers Binky, "one might get the wrong impression." These snippets are a terse reminder of the overwrought envy directed at those who flaunted rigid sexual conventions. The Maitre D's barely contained scorn erupts into full-coloured bile when Gerald cuts his hand, signalling the end to a tense, edgy scene.

However, drag artist Miss Regina Fong, in flame-coloured gown and matching wig, represents the catalyst for change and flight from the pink prison. Defying the party guests, she encourages Ian and Gerald to dance, openly acknowleging their relationship. Among the be-suited and bowtied guests, Miss Fong's lip-synched performance of Nicholas Bloomfield's title song signals a further disruption of acceptable behaviour.

It's Miss Fong's outrageousness which inspires the couple's release. Outside the club, she flings the Jaguar's car keys into Jan's hands, warning that "Jennifer Justice" is just round the corner, as the three take off into the night. Like a road movie in miniature, the drive into the dawn signals promise, as orchestral music accompanies shots of the trio laughing, trading cigarettes and arguing over directions. At the conveniently empty roadside cafe, Miss Fong again plays matchmaker, reinterpreting romance for the lovers in her charge. "Tell that you love him," she admonishes lan, and pointing a glossy fingernail at him, calls "Lights, action". And here again, Bartlett wisely opts for music rather than dialogue. Watching lan gently kiss his lover's hands is both moving and a lyrical rewriting of a classic filmic gesture. For a short film, Bartlett has created a compelling fantasy from an arid period.

Julie Wheelwright

Orlando

In the last issue we printed a set of credits for the film Orlando, which were compiled from a number of sources. Since then, Adventure Pictures have provided a definitive set of credits. We are therefore now reprinting the technical credits for the film.

United Kingdom 1992 Director: Sally Potter Certificate

Distributor Electric Pictures **Production Company** Adventure Pictures (Orlando) Ltd In association with Lenfilm (St Petersburg)/ Rio (Paris)/ Mikado Film (Rome)/ Sigma Filmproductions (Maarsen) With the participation of British Screen Made with the assistance of the European Co-production Fund (UK) Developed with the support of The European Script Fund/The National

Development Fund Producer Christopher Sheppard Co-producers Roberto Cicutto Jean Gontier Matthijs Van Heijningen Luigi Musini Vitaly Sobolev Line Producer Laurie Borg **Associate Producers** Lynn Hanke Richard Salmon Martine Kelly **Production Executives** Anna Vronskaya Linda Bruce **Production Associate** Russia: Zamir Gotta

Production Supervisor

Holland: Guurtje Buddenberg **Production Co-ordinators** Jonathan Finn Russia: Harriet Earle St Petersburg: Natalia Tokarskikh **Production Manager** 5t Petersburg: Yury Glotov **Head of Production** Uzbekhistan: Radjabov Muhamedjan **Location Manager** Tony Clarkson Casting Irene Lamb St Petersburg: Liubov Vlasenko **Assistant Directors**

> Michael Zimbrich Chris Newman Simon Moseley Christian McWilliams St Petersburg: Yury Vertlib Sasha Yurchikov Gabrielle Vorobiev Uzbekhistan: Rikhsivoj Abduvakhidov Screenplay Sally Potter Story Editor Walter Donohue Based on the novel by Virginia Woolf Director of Photography Alexei Rodionov Eastman colour Herve Schneid **Production Designers** Ben Van Os. Jan Roelfs **Art Directors** Michael Buchanan Michael Howells St Petersburg: Stanislav Romanovsky Uzbekhistan: Igor Gulyenko Set Design Russia: Christopher Hobbs **Set Dressers** Constance de Vos Floris Vos Uzbekhistan: Rashid Sharafutdinov Feodor Shoakhmedov

> > R. Majsoyutov

Todd van Hulzen Special Effects Directors St Petersburg: Yury Borovkov Viktor Okovitey Special Effects Paul Corbould

Scenic Artist

Effects Associates **Pyrotechnics** St Petersburg: Sergei Maslikov Uzbekhistan: Nikolai Borisov Aleksandr Pantushin

David Motion Sally Potter Additional: Fred Frith David Bedford

Music Performed by Contra-bass Clarinet: Richard Addison Violin/Viola: Alexander Balanescu Violin: Clare Connors Bassoon: Lindsay Cooper Clarinets/Saxophone: Andy Findon Guitars: Fred Frith Double Bass: Christopher Laurence Keyboards: David Motion Trumpets/Flugel Horn: Bruce Nockles Voices: Sally Potter Jimmy Somerville Music Producers

David Motion **Music Supervisor** Bob Last Songs "Eliza Is the Fairest Queen" by Edward Johnson, "I Am Coming" by Sally Potter, Jimmy Somerville, David Motion, performed by Jimmy Somerville: "Where'er You Walk" by George Frideric Handel, performed by Andrew

Bob Last

Watts, Peter Hayward Choreographer Jacky Lansley Costume Design Sandy Powell Additional: Dien Van Straalen Costume Supervisors Paul Minter Uzbekhistan:

Zibo Nassirova

Wardrobe

Supervisor: Clare Spragge St Petersburg: Ludmila Romanovskaya Make-up Supervisor: Morag Ross St Petersburg:

Tamara Fried Hair Supervisor Jan Archibald

Frameline Supervising Sound Editor Kant Pan Sound Editor Dialogue: Martin Evans Sound Recordist Jean-Louis Ducarme Foley: Martyn Robinson Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist Robin O'Donoghue Foley Artists Dianne Greaves Jack Stew Pauline Bennion **Stunt Co-ordinators** Steve Dent St Petersburg:

Oleg Vasilug Corrections to cast credits: John Bolt (Orlando's Father) should read John Bott Mary Macleod (First Woman) should read Mary MacLeod John Byrne should

be deleted from cast

Mark Kermode reviews this month's rental releases and laser discs, and Peter Dean new retail videos Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin (MFB) and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will simply be listed and the film review reference given in parentheses

Rental

Book of Love

USA 1990/Columbia TriStar CVT 11618

Certificate 15 Director Robert Shaye
New Line Cinema kingpin Shaye turns
his hand to directing with pleasantly
schmaltzy results. A young boy and his
pals learn about love and life during the
50s from TV, movies and rock 'n' roll.
(S&S July 1992)

The Bridge

UK 1990/Columbia TriStar CVT 17279

Certificate 15 Director Sydney Macartney A beautifully mounted adaptation of Maggie Hemingway's novel of love and social ritual, inspired by the work of Impressionist painter Wilson Steer. (S&S January 1992)

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

USA 1992/FoxVideo 1972

Certificate PG Director Fran Rubel Kuzui
An air-headed Californian teenager
(Kristy Swanson) learns from a
mysterious admirer (Donald Sutherland)
that she is next in a long line of vampire
slayers. Insubstantial, but some nice
one-liners ("Does Elvis talk to you?").
(S&S November 1992)

California Man

USA 1992/Buena Vista D 913832

Certificate PG Director Les Mayfield Limp but not unlikeable comedy about two high school kids who accidentally dig up a frozen caveman who they then pass off as an Estonian exchange student. (S&S October 1992)

Carry On Columbus

UK 1992/Warner PEV 35579

Certificate PG Director Gerald Thomas Unfunny resurrection of the deceased Carry On cycle, starring a brace of 'alternative' comedians (Rik Mayall, Alexei Sayle, Julian Clary) to augment the depleted original cast. Bring back Sid James! (S&S October 1992)

Cool World

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2625

From the creator of Fritz the Cat, this surrealistic romp about a sultry cartoon heroine (Kim Basinger) who forces her way into the real world fails to live up to expectations. Poor animation/live-action matching and an uninspired plot. (S&S January 1992)

1492: Conquest of Paradise

USA 1992/Guild 8701

Certificate 15 Director Ridley Scott
Scott's good-looking epic boasts an
intelligent script and a magnificent
performance by Gérard Depardieu
as Columbus. Unfortunately the hi-tech
gloss obscures the plot. Also available
in widescreen. (S&S November 1992)

Housesitter

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1591

Certificate PG Director Frank Oz

A feisty waitress (Goldie Hawn) transforms the life of a jilted architect (Steve Martin) when she moves into his dream house. Flimsy, episodic comedy from the sporadically talented Frank Oz. (S&S September 1992)

Knight Moves

USA/Germany 1992/ Columbia TriStar CVT 13298

Certificate 18 Director Carl Schenkel Murder, lust and chess in a dull thriller set against the backdrop of international chess championships. Less checkmate than stale, mate. (S&S October 1992)

A League of Their Own

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 14589

Certificate PG Director Penny Marshall
Unashamedly sentimental female buddy
movie, entertaining despite its lack of
coherence. Glamorous women are
recruited to play baseball while their
men are away fighting World War II.
Geena Davis steals the show.
(S&S November 1992)

The Long Day Closes

UK 1992/Curzon CV 0012

Certificate PG Director Terence Davies

A magical cinematic memory of a childhood in 50s Liverpool, Davies' follow-up to Distant Voices, Still Lives lacks its predecessor's narrative strength but exceeds it in visual panache. (S&S June 1992)

Straight Out of Brooklyn

USA 1991/Artificial Eye ART 904 Certificate 15 Director Matty Rich



Attitude: 'Straight Out of Brooklyn'

An impressive directorial debut for Rich, unflinchingly depicting the hardships of ghetto life. The portrayal of an oppressive milieu is excellent and makes up for any slackness in the narrative.

(S&S October 1992)

Waterland

UK 1992/Polygram PG 1001

Certificate 15 Director Stephen Gyllenhaal Beautiful adaptation of Graham Swift's harrowing novel about twisted family ties transferred from the eerie environs of the Fens to the US. Jeremy Irons, Sinead Cusack and Ethan Hawke lead the excellent cast. (S&S September 1992)

Rental Premiere

American Samurai

USA 1992/Warner PEV 32034

Producer Allan Greenblatt Screenplay
John Corcoran Lead Actors David Bradley,
Mark Dacascos, Valarie Trapp 87 minutes
Martial arts vehicle with an emphasis on
impressively choreographed samurai
sword action. An abducted journalist is
forced to compete with his estranged
brother in a deadly game of "live blade".

Angel Street

USA 1992/Warner PEV 12688

Certificate PG Director Rod Holcomb Producer Ken Swor Screenplay John Wells Lead Actors Robin Givens, Pamela Gidley 90 minutes

Promising and enjoyable pilot for a projected TV cop show, teaming a working-class white policewoman with an upper-class black woman detective. Gidley and Givens are great.

Baby on Board

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20180

Certificate PG Director Francis A. Schaeffer Producer Damian Lee Screenplay Damian Lee, James Shavick Lead Actors Judge Reinhold, Carole Kane, Alex Stapley, Holly Stapley 88 minutes
A New York cabbie unwittingly becomes a chauffeur for a distraught widow on the run from the mafia with her baby daughter. Disposable, formulaic comedy.

Beach Beverly Hills

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 19817

Certificate 18 Director Jonathan Sarno
Producers/Screenplay Gloria Pryor, Jonathan
Sarno Lead Actors Gloria Pryor, Heather
Ann McTague, Lynette Howe, George
Saunders 100 minutes
Soft-core drama, loosely based on the

Soft-core drama, loosely based on the Monroe classic How to Marry a Millionaire. Three models shed their clothes in order to attract wealthy men. Very dull.

Bingo

USA 1991/20.20 Vision NVT 12841

Certificate PG Director Matthew Robbins Producer Thomas Baer Screenplay Jim Strain Lead Actors Cindy Williams, David Rasche, Robert J. Steinmiller Jnr 86 minutes

A kids' comedy lacking in invention and loaded with schmaltz. A loyal dog traces his schoolboy owner across country to his new home.

Body Language

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2695

Seidelman Producer Robert M. Rolsky
Screenplay Dan Gurskis, Brian Ross
Lead Actors Heather Locklear, Linda Purl,
James Acheson, Edward Albert 89 minutes
A shameless Single White Female rip-off,
this made-for-TV thriller finds a
glamorous career woman haunted
by a psychotically jealous secretary.

The Broken Cord

USA 1991/CIC Video VHA 1595

Certificate PG Director Ken Olin Producer
Alan Barnette Screenplay Ann Beckett
Lead Actors Kim Delaney, Michael Spears,
Fredrick Leader-Charge 100 minutes
A nauseating true-life TV drama about
fetal alcohol syndrome. Jimmy Smits
agonises over the retardation of his
adopted Native American son.

Buford's Beach Bunnies

USA 1992/

Imperial Entertainment IMP 118

Certificate 18 Director Mark Pirro Producer
Andrew Garroni Screenplay Mark Pirro,
Alan Griess, Robyn Sullivan Lead Actors
Jim Hanks, Rikki Brando, Monique
Parent, Amy Page 102 minutes
A selection of scantily-clad 'babes'
attempt to seduce a woman-shy heir (Tom
Hanks' brother Jim) to win a million
dollar reward. Limp bawdy comedy.

Brad Stevens on 'Zéro de conduite' and how 'art films' fare on video

A cutting art

Jean Vigo's distinctive qualities gained him few admirers during his regrettably brief lifetime. The response of the prestigious critic of Le Journal to Vigo's L'Atalante is typical: "[the film] gives the impression of being the work of an amateur... the story is awkwardly told and the visual quality one expects from a director is not well presented." Similar charges of amateurism were to haunt Vigo's work for many years, though by the time Zéro de conduite was widely shown in 1945 (after being banned for 12 years), opinions were becoming more favourable, with one writer finding the film merely "almost amateurish" and another calling Vigo "an amateur of genius". Rehabilitation did not arrive until the emergence of the directors of the French nouvelle vague, who adopted Vigo as a spiritual godfather. And today the director's reputation stands higher than ever, with L'Atalante winning a place as one of the top ten films of all time in the recent Sight and Sound poll.

This is partly due to the fact that the prints to which we now have access are vastly superior to those seen by early audiences. L'Atalante, for instance, was lovingly restored in 1990 by Pierre Philippe and Jean-Louis Bompoint to as near to Vigo's original conception as possible. For me, however, Vigo's masterpiece remains Zéro de conduite – recently released in an uncut form by Artificial Eye,

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Zero de conduite is that it represents one of the first examples of that nostalgia for the silent cinema that was to link filmmakers as diverse as Charles Laughton. Wim Wenders (the silent film show put on by the two men in Kings of the Road; the cinematic toys in The American Friend). Orson Welles (the iris-out in The Magnificent Ambersons) and Francis Ford Coppola (the cinematograph in Bram Stoker's Dracula; the much derided Griffithian pastry-making in The Godfather Part III). In Zero de conduite silent cinema is evoked in the silent opening sequence of the two boys on the train who try to



Jean Vigo's 'L'Atalante': the work of an amateur genius?

outdo each other with a series of increasingly spectacular tricks, as well as when the most sympathetic of the teachers Huguet imitates Chaplin, and Caussat makes a ball disappear and reappear in true Méliès fashion. But primarily it is the tone of the film, made just four years after the coming of sound, that suggests a nostalgia for a more innocent cinema, the cinema of childhood, already irretrievably lost.

According to Artificial Eye, the new video is made up of a print of the film restored for a recent cinema release. together with additional footage supplied by the BBC. But when I compared the new video with the version screened on BBC2 in 1991. I found that it contained five seconds of material that had been cut for the BBC print. At the moment when the pillow fight in the dormitory goes into slow motion, we see a shot of a boy somersaulting backwards into a chair. At the beginning of the next shot his penis is clearly visible. The BBC print clumsily truncates this scene, starting the shot after the boy has been carried out of frame (the music on the video has also been slightly altered, presumably to accommodate the extra footage). The subtitles on both versions are identical.

of the two boys on the train who try to subtitles on both versions are identical,

A return to innocence: 'Zéro de conduite'

right down to the absurd translation of "Je yous dis merde" as "Bugger off".

That subtitles are no longer seen as the kiss of death for a video release. at least as far as sell-through titles are concerned, is a welcome sign (though the recent downmarket rental release of Wenders' Until the End of the World simply omits them, with the result that large chunks of the video play in unsubtitled French). And the problems of cutting or panning and scanning, so common in mainstream releases, rarely arise in the films issued by the recently established art-house labels - though the BBFC ordered a shot of a horse falling off a stairway to be cut from Artificial Eye's tape of Tarkovsky's Andrei Rublev, despite the fact that BBC2 had already shown the film uncut, while Connoisseur Video has released Tati's Mon Oncle in a cut Englishlanguage version and Welles' Confidential Report in its European print, rather than the longer and more complexly edited US version called Mr Arkadin.

Yet the choice of films released by art-house companies still seems wilfully bizarre. If you should feel the need to own copies of the complete works of Jean-Jacques Beineix and Eric Rochant, you will be all right. But if you would prefer to purchase Truffaut's The 400 Blows, Bresson's Pickpocket, Renoir's La Grande Illusion, Kurosawa's Rashomon, Ophuls' Lola Montes, Godard's Breathless, Bergman's Persona, Visconti's The Leopard. Bertolucci's The Conformist, or anything at all by Antonioni, Dreyer, Melville, Mizoguchi. Ozu or Rossellini, you may be disappointed. (And why didn't Artificial Eye take the opportunity of accompanying Zéro de conduite, running at 41 mins, 40 secs, with Vigo's other two shorts: A propos de Nice and Taris?)

Clearly these are early days, and one does not wish to appear ungrateful or to ignore the very real problems involved in obtaining rights. Some of the above titles have already been scheduled, but when will one of the art-house labels take the plunge and release, say, all the surviving Mizoguchi films, from the earliest onwards? Surely if it's good enough for Star Trek, it should be good enough for the director who was once called "the Shakespeare of the cinema".

Comrades of Summer

Certificate 15 Director Tommy Lee Wallace
Producers Tim Braine, David Pritchard
Screenplay Robert Rodat Lead Actors Joe
Mantegna, Natalya Negodo, Michael
Lerner, Mark Rolston 108 minutes
An injured American baseball star
coaches Russia's first national team and
challenges his old stateside comrades.
A sporadically entertaining comedy,
lifted by the presence of Mantegna
and Lerner.

Crazy in Love

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20182

Certificate PG Director Martha Coolidge
Producer Karen Danaher-Dorr Screenplay
Gerald Ayres Lead Actors Holly Hunter,
Gena Rowlands, Julian Sands,
Bill Pullman, Frances McDormand
90 minutes

A flighty woman (Hunter) is led astray from her marriage by a handsome English photographer (Sands). Although somewhat slight, this finely directed and well acted bitter-sweet romantic comedy is worth a look.

Da Vinci's War

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 19840

Certificate 18 Director Raymond Martino
Producers Joey Travolta, Stephen H.
Rockmael Screenplay Raymond Martino
Lead Actors Michael Nouri, Joey Travolta,
Vanity, Richard Foronjy 92 minutes
A Vietnam vet avenges the murder of his
sister by rounding up his old comrades
and taking the law into his own hands.
A violent action pic.

Dirty Work

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2696

Certificate 15 Director John McPherson
Producer Tom Rowe Screenplay
Aaron Julien Lead Actors Kevin Dobson,
John Ashton, Roxann Biggs,
Mitchell Ryan 84 minutes
TV action thriller. A disreputable bailbond merchant, on the run from the
mob after killing a drug dealer, sets up
his partner to take the rap.

Doppelganger

USA 1992/TTC 8402

Certificate 18 Director Avi Nesher Producer
Donald P. Borchers Screenplay Avi Nesher
Lead Actors Drew Barrymore,
George Newbern, Dennis Christopher,
Leslie Hope 100 minutes
A cracking horror tale, inventively
written and efficiently directed.
A schizophrenic woman suspected of
matricide is surrounded by a web
of intrigue and violence. Barrymore
cements her reputation as the rising
queen of Rental Premiere.

Lady Boss

USA 1992/Odyssey ODY 335

Certificate 15 Director Charles Jarrott

Producer Steve McGlothen Screenplay
Jackie Collins Lead Actors Kim Delaney,
Jack Scalia, Alan Rachins, Phil Morris
175 minutes
TV mini series adaptation of Jackie

TV mini-series adaptation of Jackie Collins' pulp best-seller.

Legacy of Lies

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1608

Certificate 15 Director Bradford Way Producer Barry Berg Screenplay David Black Lead Actors Martin Landau, Michael Ontkean, Eli Wallach 90 minutes
A well written and performed TV thriller,
played out against the backdrop of the
Jewish mafia. A troubled cop (Ontkean)
attempts to come to terms with his
family's violent heritage. A new twist
on the gangster formula.

The Linguini Incident

USA 1991/20.20 Vision NVT 19367

Producer Arnold Orgolino Screenplay
Tamar Brott, Richard Shepard Lead Actors
David Bowie, Rosanna Arquette,
Eszter Balint, André Gregory,
Viveca Lindfors 105 minutes
Dreadful romantic comedy, fortunately
spared a UK theatrical release. Arquette
as an escapologist and Bowie as a suave
conman vie for the worst actor award.

Mission of Justice

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20181

Certificate 18 Director Steve Barnett Producers Pierre David, Kurt Anderson Screenplay George Saunders, John Bryant Hedberg Lead Actors Jeff Wincot, Brigitte Nielsen, Luca Bercovici, Matthias Hues 95 minutes

A disillusioned cop abandons the police force to avenge the murder of his boxing buddy. High-kicking karate action movie, spiced up by Nielsen as a fiendish villian.

Night Visions

USA 1990/MGM/UA/Warner PEV 53090

Certificate 15 Director Wes Craven
Producers Rick Nathanson, Thomas Baum,
Marianne Maddelena Screenplay
Wes Craven Lead Actors Loryn Locklin,
James Remar 89 minutes
Craven's inventive pilot for an unrealised
TV series teams a jaded cop with a fey
psychic woman who uses her powers to
track a killer. A promising idea.

Overkill

USA 1993/Odyssey ODY 337

Certificate 15 Director Peter Levin Producer William Beaudine Screenplay Fred Mills Lead Actors Jean Smart, Park Overall, Tim Grimm, Ernie Lively, Geoffrey Rivas 93 minutes

The first of what will surely be a host of films about the life of America's first female serial killer, Aileen Wuornos. Predictably, this sanitised TV film ignores Wuornos' lesbian relationship with her partner and offers few insights into her psyche.

Over the Hill

Australia 1991/20.20 Vision NVT 18591

Certificate PG Director George Miller Producers Robert Caswell, Bernard Terry Screenplay Robert Caswell Lead Actors Olympia Dukakis, Sigrid Thornton, Derek Fowlds 99 minutes

A whimsical road movie following the adventures of a sixty-year-old woman who sets off across Australia in an old Chevy after finding herself unwelcome in her daughter's home.

Poison by

USA 1992/Guild 8713

Certificate 18 Director Katt Shea Ruben
Producer Andy Ruben Screenplay
Andy Ruben, Katt Shea Ruben Lead Actors
Drew Barrymore, Tom Skerritt,
Sara Gilbert, Cheryl Ladd 90 minutes
Rental Premiere of the month. This
ingenious psycho-thriller draws on both
art-house and exploitation cinema.

Barrymore is excellent as the untameable outsider who infiltrates and rips apart a middle-class family already racked with inner tensions.

Prey of the Chameleon

USA 1991/

Imperial Entertainment IMP 117

Certificate 18 Director Fleming Fuller
Producers Pat Peach, Ron Rothstein
Screenplay April Campbell Jones,
Fleming Fuller Lead Actors
Daphne Zuniga, James Wilder,
Alexandra Paul, Don Harvey 91 minutes
Entertainingly silly trash thriller about
a cross-dressing psycho killer who steals
the clothes and identities of her victims.

The Secret Passion of Robert Clayton

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 2701

Certificate 15 Director E.W. Swackhamer
Producer Ed Milkovich Screenplay
Brian Ross Lead Actors John Mahoney,
Scott Valentine, Eve Gordon,
Kevin Conroy 87 minutes
Bland TV erotic thriller. A big city lawyer
does battle against his attorney father
in court over a murder case involving
his lover.

Shadowhunter

USA 1992/Medusa/20.20 Vision MO 389

Certificate 18 Director J.S. Cardone Producers Carol Kottenbrook, Scott Einbinder Screenplay J.S. Cardone Lead Actors Scott Glen, Angela Alvarado, Robert Beltran, Benjamin Bratt 90 minutes

A murder mystery set on a Native American reservation. Glen delivers a powerful performance as a city cop seduced by Indian magic. Intelligent and engrossing.

Slowburn

Canada 1989/First Independent VA 20179

Certificate 18 Director John Eyres Executive

Producers John Eyres, Geoff Griffiths,
John Curtis, Zafar Malik, Lloyd Simandl
Screenplay Steven Lister Lead Actors
William Smith, Anthony James, Ivan
Rogers, Scott Anderson 94 minutes
A New York narcotics detective uses
unconventional and violent methods
to infiltrate warring gangs.

Solomon's Choice

USA 1992/Odyssey ODY 334

Executive Producer Andrew Adelson
Screenplay Sandra Jennings, Maggie
Kleinman Lead Actors Joanna Kerns,
Bruce Davison, Reese Witherspoon,
Joseph Mazzello 90 minutes
True-life TV trauma movie about two
parents who struggle to find a bonemarrow donor for their sick daughter.

Steel Justice

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1599

Certificate PG Director Christopher Crowe
Producer Stephen Lovejoy
Screenplay Christopher Crowe, John Hill
Lead Actors Robert Taylor, J.R. Preston,
Roy Brocksmith 87 minutes
Ridiculous but amusing sci-fi thriller.
A cop, devastated by the death of his son,
is visited by an amiable alien who offers
him hope in the shape of a gigantic robot

Stompin' at the Savoy

named Robosauras.

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1600

Certificate PG Director Debbie Allen

Executive Producer Richard Maynard Screenplay Beverly Sayer Lead Actors Lynn Whitfield, Vanessa Williams, Jasmine Guy, Mario Van Peebles 91 minutes

Upbeat TV movie set in 30s Harlem, used as a showcase for upcoming black actors. Four women with dreams of success dance away their troubles at the Savoy.

Talons of the Eagle

USA 1992/Braveworld BRV 10148

Certificate 18 Director Michael Kennedy
Producer Jalal Merhi Screenplay J. Stephen
Maunder Lead Actors Billy Blanks,
Jalal Merhi, James Hong, Priscilla
Barnes 93 minutes
Muscle-flexing action abounds as two
undercover cops infiltrate a New York
crime lord's operation following the

Twin Sisters

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20178

murder of two DEA agents.

Certificate 15 Director Tom Berry Producers
Tom Berry, Franco Battista Screenplay
David Preston Lead Actors
Stepfanie Kramer, Susan Almgren,
Frederic Forrest, James Brolin 89 minutes
A wealthy career woman poses as her
identical twin sister to learn more about
her death, uncovering a world of
prostitution and vice in the process.

Retail

After Hours

USA 1985/Warner PES 11528 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Martin Scorsese
Scorsese's underrated yuppie nightmare
has Griffin Dunne unsuccessfully trying
to get home from New York's SoHo
district during the course of one night,
and becoming an unwilling witness to
the Big Apple's weirder side.
(MFB No. 629)

Alligator

USA 1980/

Braveworld STV 2080 Price £10.99

A baby alligator ends up down Chicago's sewers, where it grows up to be a 36-foot monster. Enlivened by a witty John Sayles script, this followed in the wake of the many post-Jaws monster movies.

(MFB No. 582)

Alligator 2: The Mutation

USA 1990/

Braveworld STV 2081 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Jon Hess

Poor sequel which is only made bearable
by ridiculous scenes of a stuffed alligator
terrorising hordes of screaming extras.

(S&S December 1991/Video Premiere)

Annie Hall

USA 1977/MGM/UA PES 50251 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Woody Allen
Welcome return for Allen's exquisite
Oscar-winning romantic comedy starring
the director and Diane Keaton. Like
After Hours, this appears under the new
Elite Collection label. (MFB No. 525)

Another You

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 22981 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Maurice Phillips (S&S September 1992/Video Premiere)

La Belle Noiseuse

France 1991/Artificial Eye ART 038 Price £22.49 (2 tapes)

Certificate 15 Director Jacques Rivette
Previously available in the two-hour
'Divertimento' version, this ravishing
study of a painter and his muse won
the Grand Prix at Cannes in 1991.
Michel Piccoli is inspired to complete
an unfinished painting when a young
woman (Emmanuelle Béart) enters
his world. Full length version/Subtitles
(S&S April 1992)

Bugsy

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 23645 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Barry Levinson Also available in widescreen (S&S April 1992)

Cape Fear

USA 1991/ CIC Video VHR 1557 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Martin Scorsese (S&S March 1992)

The Cincinnati Kid

USA 1965/MGM/UA PES 50135 Price E8.99

Certificate 15 Director Norman Jewison To poker what The Hustler was to pool, this card-playing epic set in the 30s stars Steve McQueen and Edward G. Robinson. Jewison replaced Peckinpah at the start of shooting. (MFB No. 383)

Deceived

USA 1991/Touchstone D 413062 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Damian Harris (S&S April 1992)

Desert Law

Italy/USA Year unknown/MIA V 3358 Price £10.99

(S&S January 1992/Video Premiere)

Diary of a Chambermaid (Le Journal d'une femme de chambre)

France 1963/Electric Pictures EP 0013 Price £15.99/Widescreen

Certificate 15 Director Luis Buñuel
Jeanne Moreau is brillant as poor
Celestine who leaves 30s Paris to work
as a chambermaid in a provincial
household, where she acts as a catalyst
to the householders' repressions.
Vintage Buñuel, foot fetishism and all.
Subtitles (MFB No. 380)



Jeanne Moreau: 'Diary of a Chambermaid'

Dying Young

USA 1991/ FoxVideo 1914 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Joel Schumacher
(S&S September 1991)

Equus

USA 1977/MGM/UA PES 50675 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Sidney Lumet Lumet's adaptation of Peter Shaffer's stage play is admirable but ultimately turgid and wordy. None the less it does feature one of Richard Burton's finest performances. (MFB No. 526)

Father of the Bride

USA 1991/Touchstone D 413352 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Charles Shyer (S&S March 1992)

Flirting

Australia 1991/Warner PES 12333 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director John Duigan (S&S November 1991)

Ghosts...of the Civil Dead

Australia 1988/Electric EP 0022 Price £15.99

Certificate 18 Director John Hillcoat
This tale of a prison lock-down and the
events that led to the crisis is best seen
for its impressive production design and
clinical photography rather than for
its confused narrative. An atmosphere of
extreme menace is conjured up, in part
through a top performance by Nick Cave.
(MFB No. 665)

Homicide

USA 1991/First Independent VA 30260 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director David Mamet (S&S November 1991)

Hook

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 13187 Price £14.99

Certificate U Director Steven Spielberg Also available in widescreen (S&S April 1992)

Hot Shots

USA 1991/FoxVideo 1930 Price £10.99 Certificate PG Director Jim Abrahams (S&S January 1992)

Killer Nun (Suor omicide)

Italy 1978/Redemption RED 005 Price £12.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Giulio Berruti
Producer Enzo Gaalo Screenplay Giulio
Berruti, Alberto Tarallo Lead Actors Anita
Ekberg, Alida Valli, Massimo Serato, Lou
Castel, Joe Dallesandro 87 minutes
70s shock-schlock involving lesbian nuns
and S&M. A couple of Hitchcock-style set
pieces are not enough to carry this
nonsense. Subtitles (Retail Premiere)

King of New York

USA 1989/VCI VC 3416 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Abel Ferrara
With Ferrara and the new brutalism in
vogue, this is a good time to look again
at this stylish gangster thriller starring
Christopher Walken. (S&S July 1991)

The Manchurian Candidate

USA 1962/MGM/UA PES 51369/Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director John Frankenheimer
Frankenheimer's masterpiece of paranoia
has influenced many films, most recently
Jacob's Ladder. A Korean war hero



Paranoid: Laurence Harvey, Angela Lansbury in 'The Manchurian Candidate'

(Laurence Harvey) returns home as a brainwashed zombie programmed to kill a politician. (MFB No. 656)

My Girl

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 23647 Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director Howard Zieff (S&S February 1992)

Network

USA 1976/MGM/UA PES 50012 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Sidney Lumet
An outrageous satire on TV
programming that caught the public eye
when first released but now appears
dated. Peter Finch and Faye Dunaway
received Oscars for their performances.
(MFB No. 539)

Peter Pan

USA 1952/Walt Disney D 202452 Price £14.99

Certificate U Director Hamilton Luske
More magical than Spielberg's woeful
Hook, Disney's animated version of
Barrie's play is arguably also more
effective. Hans Conried (the voice of
Hook) is worth a mention, as is the
combination of music, action and
comedy. A simultaneous rental and
retail release. (MFB No. 232)

The Phantom of Liberty (Le Fantôme de la Liberté)

France 1974/Electric EP 0012 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Luis Buñuel
The most distinguishing facet of this revel in sex, religion and politics is the narrative structure which casually links episodes set in ninteenth-century Spain to those set in contemporary Paris.
The most famous vignette is the dinner party at which chairs and toilets are substituted for one another. Subtitles (MFB No. 493)

Prince of Tides

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 22840 Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Director Barbra Streisand Also available in widescreen (S&S March 1992)

Rebecca's Daughters

UK 1992/Curzon CV 0015 Price £15.99 Certificate 15 Director Karl Francis (S&S May 1992)

Reefer Madness

USA 1938/VVL VVD 1077 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Louis Gasnier Producer George A. Hirliman Screenplay Arthur Hoerl Lead Actors Dorothy Short, Kenneth Craig, Lillian Miles, Dave O'Brien, Thelma White 60 minutes Shown regularly on the college circuits, this pseudo-documentary was made to inform the public of the perils of marijuana. Not as good as its reputation, but with some priceless moments of unintentional hilarity. (Retail Premiere)

The Right Stuff

USA 1983/Warner PES 20014 Price £8.99

Certificate 15 Director Philip Kaufman Kaufman's masterly epic, based on Tom Wolfe's novel about the first flights into space. Best seen for its remarkable ensemble cast – including Scott Glen, Ed Harris, Dennis Quaid, Sam Shepard and Barbara Hershey. (MFB No. 602)

Salon Kitty

Italy/Germany/France 1976/ Redemption RED 004 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Tinto Brass
A cross between The Damned, Personal
Services and Caligula. Brass looks at the fall
of the Nazi empire through a kinky
brothel operation set up to catch traitors'
pillow talk. (MFB No. 524)

Scanners II: The New Order

USA 1991/Braveworld STV 2136 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Christian Duguay (S&S December 1991/Video Premiere)

Separate but Equal

USA 1991/Odyssey ODY 744 Price £14,99 Certificate PG Director George Stevens Jnr (S&S January 1992/Video Premiere)

Son of the Morning Star

USA 1991/Odyssey ODY 728 Price £14.99 Certificate PG Director Mike Robe (S&S December 1991/Video Premiere)

Summer City

Australia 1976/MIA V 3356 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Christopher Fraser

Producer/Screenplay Phil Avalon Lead Actors
John Jarrat, Phil Avalon, Steve Bisley,
Mel Gibson 82 minutes
Low-budget Australian beach movie
which suffers from poor sound quality
and a run-of-the-mill story. Set in the 50s,
four surfing buddies run into trouble
when one of them begins dating a local
girl at a beach resort. (Retail Premiere)

Teen Agent

USA 1991/Warner PES 12071 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director William Dear

(S&S October 1991)

Thunderbolt and Lightfoot

USA 1974/MGM/UA PES 51392 Price £8.99

Certificate 18 Director Michael Cimino
An odd but engaging road movie-cumthriller – which has cult status – starring
Clint Eastwood and Jeff Bridges. A bank
robber tries to avoid his ex-partners who
believe that he has betrayed them.
(MFB No. 487)

Ultraman

Japan/Australia 1991/Island ULTV 1001 Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director Andrew Prowse
Producers Kiyoshi Suzuki, Sue Wild
Screenplay Terry Larsen Lead Actors
Dore Kraus, Gia Carides, Ralph Cotterill,
Grace Parr 94 minutes
Echoes of Godzilla in this live-action
feature, made to celebrate the 25th
anniversary of Japan's long-running cult
TV series. Ultraman battles against an
alien villain who threatens the world.
(Retail Premiere)

V.I. Warshawski

USA 1991/Hollywood D 912540 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Jeff Kanew (S&S January 1992)

Wayne's World

USA 1992/CIC Video VHR 2628 Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director Penelope Spheeris (S&S June 1992)

Winning

USA 1969/Video Legends VLG 1605 Price £12.99

Certificate PG Director James Goldstone
Well-made but dull melodrama in
which Paul Newman indulges his love
of the race track. Newman plays a racing
driver so caught up in his work that his
wife begins to take an exceptional
interest in his partner (Robert Wagner).
(MFB No. 430)

Young Soul Rebels

UK 1991/Braveworld STV 2195 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Isaac Julien (S&S September 1991)

Zéro de conduite

France 1933/Artificial Eye ART 054 Price £12.99

This newly-restored print is the most complete version of Vigo's film. Noted for its influence on the French nouvelle vague, Zéro de conduite caused a furore at the time with its tale of pupils rebelling against a repressive boarding school system. See 'A cutting art', page 67.

B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 153)

Retail Collections

Dr Who and the Daleks/ Daleks: Invasion Earth 2150 AD

UK 1965/1966/MGM UA PES 38328 Price £12.99

Certificate U Director Gordon Flemyng Thirty years old this year, the hit TV series Dr Who spawned these two collectable but tiresome full-length features. Peter Cushing stars. (MFB Nos. 379/391)

Norman McLaren: Creative Process

Canada/UK 1990/Connoisseur CR 104 £15.99

Certificate PG Director Donald McWilliams
Producer David Verrall Screenplay Donald
McWilliams, Susan Huycke 116 minutes
McWilliams illuminates McLaren's
artistic method, using experimental
footage and extracts from his
uncompleted films. This documentary
was completed eight years after
McLaren's death. (Retail Premiere)

Norman McLaren: Selected Films

Canada 1993/Connoisseur CR 103 £15.99

Certificate PG Director Norman McLaren Producer David Verrall Screenplay Norman McLaren 114 minutes

McLaren's range is well illustrated here with 14 of the director's 60 short films, including the award-winning Neighbours. (Retail Premiere)

Ray Harryhausen Sci-Fi Collection: Earth vs the Flying Saucers/First Men in the Moon

USA 1956/1964/Columbia TriStar CVR P52 Price £10.99

Certificate U Directors Fred F. Sears/ Nathan Juran

It Came from Beneath the Sea/ 20 Million Miles to Earth

USA 1954/1957/Columbia TriStar CVR P51 Price £10.99

Certificate PG/U Directors Robert Gordon/ Nathan Juran

Two impressive sci-fi double-movie tapes with Harryhausen special effects. Earth vs the Flying Saucers gives a superb rendition of the clichéd invasion from space theme and Lionel Jeffries steals the show as the nutty professor who flys to the moon in First Men in the Moon. A giant octopus goes on the rampage in It Came from Beneath the Sea – a must-see classic – and another sea monster makes an appearance in 20 Million Miles to Earth.

(MPB Nos. 281/386/258/286) The MGM Musical Collection:

An American in Paris

USA 1951/MGM/UA PES 50006 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Vincente Minnelli A six-times Oscar winner, this classic musical love story stars Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron. (MFB No. 323)

Brigadoon

USA 1954/MGM/UA PES 50040 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Vincente Minnelli Based on the hit Broadway show, a fantasy set in the mythical mists of Scotland. (MFB No. 258)

Easter Parade

USA 1948/MGM/UA PES 50256 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Charles Walters When Gene Kelly damaged an ankle on the eve of production, MGM replaced him with Fred Astaire in this Irving Berlin musical. (MFB No. 180)

Meet Me in St Louis

USA 1944/MGM/UA/PES 50005 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Vincente Minnelli A tale of a turn-of-the-century family having to move to New York from St Louis, Judy Garland sings her heart out. (MFB No. 134)

On the Town

USA 1949/MGM UA PES 50057 Price £10.99

Certificate U Directors Gene Kelly/ Stanley Donen Three sailors spend 24 hours on shore leave in New York in this seminal musical. Kelly's dance routines are regarded as some of the best ever. (MFB No. 194)

Seven Brides for Seven Brothers

USA 1954/MGM/UA PES 50091 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Stanley Donen
Brillant set pieces and an excellent score
enliven this stodgy box-office smash hit
about seven brothers who comb the local
villages for spouses. (MFB No. 251)

Laser disc

The Arrangement

Tartan/Blue Dolphin TVL 050
PAL CLV Widescreen 1.66:1
USA 1969 £29.95
Certificate 18 Director Elia Kazan
(MFB No. 434)

Badlands

Tartan/Blue Dolphin TVL 047

PAL CLV Widescreen 1.66:1

USA 1974 £29.95

Certificate 18 Director Terrence Malick
(MFB No. 490)

Bridge on the River Kwai

Columbia TriStar LD 10001 PAL CLV (2 disc set) Widescreen 2.35:1 Dolby stereo

Certificate PG Director David Lean
Equally loved and hated by contemporary
critics, Lean's classic war story stars
Alec Guinness as a POW who builds a
bridge to boost the morale of his
comrades, only to see it used by the
Japanese. (MFB No. 286)

Ghostbusters/Ghostbusters II

PAL CLV (2 disc set) Widescreen
2.35:1/1.66:1 Dolby stereo
USA 1984/1989 £34.99
Certificate PG Director Ivan Reitman
Dan Aykroyd and Bill Murray lead the beautifully straight-faced cast in the original comedy-fantasy blockbuster, which spawned the money-spinning but lacklustre sequel. (MFB Nos. 611/671)

Running on Empty

PAL CLV Fullscreen 1.33:1 Dolby surround
USA 1988 £24.99
Certificate 15 Director Sidney Lumet
This politically astute rites of passage
movie boasts the finest performance
of River Phoenix's career. A young boy
attempts to come to terms with maturity
while his ex-radical parents (Christine

The Terminal Man

(MFB No. 667)

Tartan/Blue Dolphin 049

PAL CLV Widescreen 1.75:1

USA 1974 £29.95

Certificate 15 Director Mike Hodges
(MFB No. 643)

Lahti, Judd Hirsch) evade the law.

WINDUP

By Peter Dean

The special-interest section of a good retail store can throw up any number of curios. 'How to Train Your Gun Dog' is one of the more obscure, but it's no stranger than 'Royal Four in Hand with HRH Duke of Edinburgh' — a film about the Duke's limited-appeal brand of carriage racing.

The Windsors are big business on video, with 50-odd documentaries ranging from last year's 'Elizabeth R' to 'Diana — Model Princess' — an analysis of her fashion sense.

When the BBC launched its video arm in 1981 it did so with a commemorative video of Charles and Diana's wedding, 'The Royal Wedding', and discovered that ardent royalists would buy videos as they once collected coronation mugs and biscuit tins. With Andrew and Fergie's marriage two different videos were in the stores the following day - the BBC video earning itself a place in the record books as the fastest-ever produced (24 hours including sleeve, duplication and delivery to the shops). It is a sign of the times that both of these royal wedding videos have now been deleted from the BBC list. But images of the royal family are still effective in selling non-royal tapes: they can be found on the covers of many of the Pathé newsreel videos and the similar 'Memories' series and are staples for feature films, television series and comedy tapes like 'Spitting Image' and the soap-spoof 'Pallas'.

Within this context, it is not surprising to see
the emergence of a group of dramatised royal
'divorce' videos – a new sub-genre using
lookalike actors to play out scenes from royal
marriage fiascos – that comprises the triptych
of 'Andrew & Fergie – Behind the Palace Doors'
(Columbia TriStar, £10.99), 'The Fall of the
House of Windsor' (Scimitar, £10.99) and
'Diana: Her True Story' (Starvision, £13.99).
Not since the 'Raid on Entebbe' films has there
been such a surge of dubious productions relying
on the same raw material.

To judge by the success of Andrew Morton's book, 'Diana' the video will no doubt move straight into the charts on its 23 March release, aided by the massive publicity campaign that accompanied BSkyB's exclusive screening. The video is also targeted at the international market for which the other two titles were primarily produced. A direct outcome of the royal family's "annus horribilis", these what-the-footman-saw peeks at royal disharmony are soaps whose plot we are all familiar with thanks to the popular press. Every notorious tabloid photograph and headline-making scene is re-enacted, but where the dramas reach behind palace doors the verisimilitude palls.

"I married Randy Andy and I ended up living with Andy Capp," Fergie berates her couchpotato husband before arranging a photo shoot



Royal Dallas: 'Diana: Her True Story'

in 'Hooray' (sic) magazine. Fact or fantasy, these films are almost like tabloid journalism brought to life. In 'Diana', the princess returns to Kensington Palace alone and is seen practising her ballet to the strains of 'Swan Lake', only to be interrupted by the news of the death of a close friend. Events in the 1968 royal feature 'The Lion in Winter' (whose producer Martin Poll executive-produced 'Diana') may be equally fanciful, but it's less easy to spot at a historical distance.

What all three videos share, apart from their 'Dynasty'-like conventions (extensive close-ups, climaxes every ten minutes with slow fade-outs), is a healthy disregard for the royal family as an institution. Each shows the 'outsiders' to this world rebuffed by 'The Firm'. Romance becomes 'The Job'.

Of course for loyal subjects, all this video attention is simply beyond the pale. When the documentary 'Diana – A Portrait' was to be launched at the Savoy last year, amid news of the break-up of the Charles/Diana marriage, invitations were hastily recalled when the hotel discovered what the launch was for. Terrestrial television has similarly kept a distance – out of respect or because the franchise battle is still fresh in the minds of the inhabitants of the boardrooms.

But all this reticence does is to leave the 'bad boys' of home entertainment (BSkyB and video) to deliver the films and form a de facto relationship — one which only occurs when the satellite channel has an exclusive licence to a programme. It has happened in the past with sporting events that take a dramatic turn — Tyson's defeat by Douglas and Ruddock's defeat by Lewis — witnessed on television only by the limited audience with satellite dishes. Should video sales of the royal fisticuffs prove successful, actors resembling Princes Harry and William should be contacting their agents straight away. That, or make way for the Sega and Nintendo versions.



Married to The Family: 'Diana: Her True Story'

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Unfair

From Stephen Bourne

While Andrea Stuart's 'Making Whoopi' (S&S February) offers some fascinating insights into the complexities surrounding Whoopi Goldberg's problematic screen persona, I want to take issue with some of the misrepresentations in the author's argument.

To begin with, the great Hattie McDaniel never portrayed Mammy in Gone With the Wind with "brick bosom and bulging eyes". Though not militant and politically active like some of her contemporaries, such as Paul Robeson, McDaniel was nevertheless a clever, gifted actress with a flair for playing broad comedy. McDaniel's mammies were never submissive or subservient. Time and time again, McDaniel breathed life into Beulah, Cleota and Delilah, giving them a wide range of moods: aggressive, defiant, camp, hostile, flamboyant and tough. These were not the roles as written, but the creations of an actress that Hollywood failed to stifle.

In Gone With the Wind, Hattie's co-star Butterfly McQueen did not portray the "classic 'pickaninny". Her performance has been accurately described by the black film historian Donald Bogle: "...had she been a mere pickanniny, she might have engendered hostility or embarrassed audiences. Instead she seemed to provide an outlet for the repressed fears of the audience. Her performance is marked by fragility, hysteria and absurdity. She is a unique combination of the comic and the pathetic."

Stuart claims that Goldberg has avoided the "female stereotype" played by Hattie McDaniel. Yet in most of her comedy films Goldberg's characters are reminiscent of McDaniel's. For example, in Ghost, Oda Mae Brown is to Demi Moore and Patrick Swayze what Mammy is to Scarlett and Rhett. Like McDaniel, Goldberg deservedly won an Oscar for subverting and transforming an underwritten and stereotypical role. Mammy and Oda are safe and non-threatening for mass white consumption but McDaniel and Goldberg made them memorable screen characters. I agree that Goldberg has rarely been seen in the arms of a black lover, but at least in The Long Walk Home (1990) she is married and has a warm and loving relationship with her family.

Though Hollywood's track record for giving decent roles to black actresses is poor, Stuart is wrong to say that only four actresses have received Oscar nominations. Let us not forget the other eight she fails to mention: Ethel Waters, Juanita Moore, Beah Richards, Diana Ross, Diahann Carroll, Alfre Woodard, Margaret Avery and Oprah Winfrey.

London SE5

Riefenstahl's nature

From Peter McCall

It has been suggested that there is a connection between Leni Riefenstahl's love of nature and the human body, and fascist aesthetics (Thomas Elsaesser, S&S February). However, it seems to me that Professor



Let us be fair: Leni Riefenstahl

Elsaesser left out some important facts in his article.

My point is that Leni Riefenstahl's Olympia is entirely non-political. It celebrates, via the 1936 Olympics, the beauty of the human body in action on the field of sport and athletics. The film gives equal coverage to athletes of all nations, showing to advantage, for example, the achievements of the great black American athlete Jesse Owens. The film concentrates very little on Hitler and other members of the Nazi Party in the stadium, giving them no more coverage than would have been accorded any head of state of a host country.

Let us be fair. In Olympia, Leni Riefenstahl made a very beautiful, non-political film to be enjoyed by all peoples of all races throughout the world. Doctor Goebbel's propaganda ministry may well have tried to have the achievements of Owens and others edited out, but the fact remains that it was released to the world giving full coverage to Owens and his great achievements. The film went on to win the Grand Prix at the 1938 Venice Film Festival, but in spite of this, it was not shown publicly in Great Britain and America – for 'political' reasons.

Controversy continues to surround Leni Riefenstahl as a great documentary film-maker working in Nazi Germany in the 30s and 40s. Perhaps she should be viewed in the same light as, say, that of any of the great German engineers and industrialists working in Germany in the same period whose products we today drive, use in our homes and enjoy.

Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire

Zero

From Alan Lovell

"The zero moments of image and sound indicate how at the centre of any representation or communication there is a vertiginous emptiness – moments of solitude or madness which resist symbolisation but which are also the space where new thoughts and realities emerge" (Colin MacCabe on Bernard Rose, S&S March).

"Have you read the latest MacCabe?"

- "Yes, it's absolute rubbish" (Dialogue from Candyman).

Wheelchair cinema

From Simon Prosser

A recent incident at the Cardiff MGM cinema, in which a disabled person was turned away from a screening, led the manager to proclaim proudly that two seats had been removed from one of the three auditoria to facilitate wheelchair access.

Are disabled people in South Wales supposed to be grateful for this crass gesture? Are the disabled all over Britain to take heart that the MGM in Cardiff is showing the way forward? No.

We, as the cinemagoing public, cannot put up with this disgusting situation. We must demand change from the cinemas and the government. Films are the art form of the people, but still today many of the people are excluded from this art. A cinema would not be allowed to open without proper fire escapes, or even toilet facilities, but it seems as though these big, hugely profitable companies can please themselves about their policy towards disabled people.

Surely the Heritage Secretary Peter Brooke must act now and stop discrimination in the cinemas and demand equal rights for everyone to watch a film.

Yuysddu, Gwent

• We contacted Cardiff MGM and were referred to John Osborne, MGM Cinema's Media Spokesperson. These are his comments:

MGM do their best to provide wheelchair access, but are limited by the building structure of older cinemas. The 30s single-screen theatres have been converted into split-level multiscreens, whose upper levels are inaccessible to some disabled people because there are too many stairs.

Home Office cinema guidelines state that wheelchairs should be admitted to ground-level screens only, and Cardiff does have one screen with three wheelchair spaces. Under the safety regulations, the licensing authority must consent before disabled people can be admitted to the cinema. When MGM last surveyed the cinema in 1977, the City Council decided that Cardiff MGM's upstairs screens were still unsafe for wheelchair access.

Undubbed

From Mairi Macdonald Chief Film Buyer, Channel 4

I was suprised to read in the March issue of Sight and Sound that Channel 4 was considering dubbing "foreign" films. As far as I'm concerned Channel 4 will continue to show movies as they have been made (subject to ITC regulations), including the widest possible range of world cinema – undubbed.

London W1

Funny fate

From Philip Kemp

A footnote to Lizzie Francke's appreciation of Audrey Hepburn (S&S March): her most prominent pre-Roman Holiday screen role wasn't the brief and enchanting moment in Lavender Hill Mob (which incidentally occurs not "in the final minutes" but in the opening scene). Hepburn's biggest part in her early years came in a less well-remembered Ealing picture: Thorold Dickinson's uneasy, ill-starred political melodrama Secret People, where she was billed in third place as the heroine's sister.

But it's quite true that British producers inexplicably ignored her individuality and beauty. (Michael Balcon later kicked himself for having failed to put her under contract). Although given the British cinema's woeful misuse of other witty, idiosyncratic actresses of the period (Joan Greenwood, Kay Kendall, Glynis Johns), it's perhaps just as well – for Hepburn and for us – that she made the break to Hollywood.

London NW1

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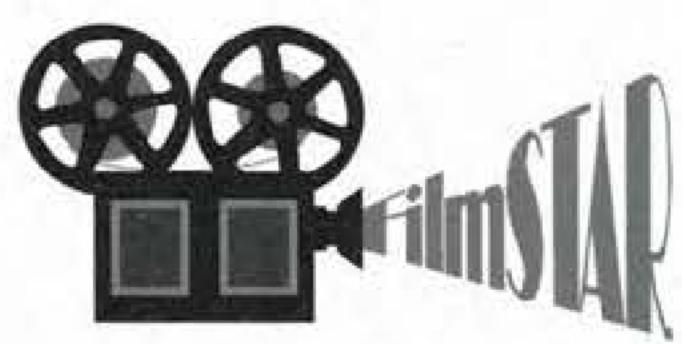
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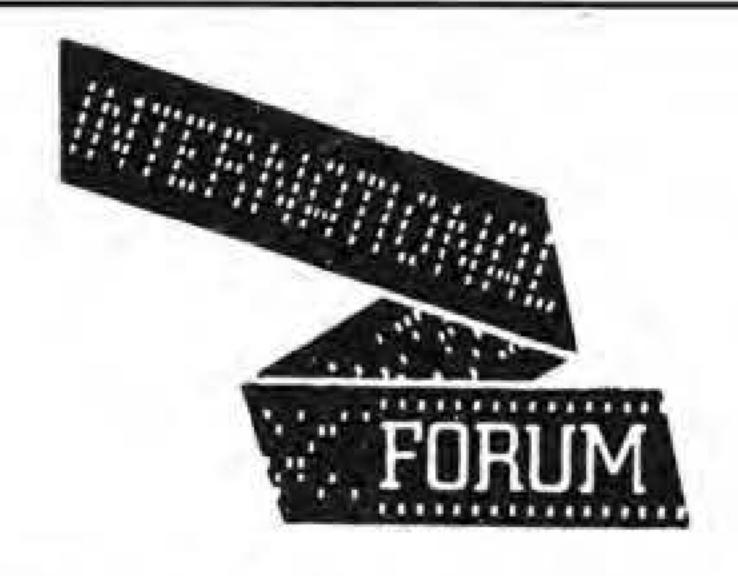
Produced and Directed by

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Tel 081 746 0555 Fax 081 743 5743



Presents a Spring programme for Writers, Screenwriters, Directors, Producers and Script Editors.

JURGEN WOLFF - SCREENPLAYS: WRITING FROM THE HEART

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An innovative workshop meant to help writers see a fresh approach and new ways to create characters, plots and screen dialogue. It also encourages writers to develop the discipline and stamina needed to develop their own ideas.

"Learned some very valuable techniques which I'm sure I'll be able to use to great effect"

Michael Ferguson. Television Director/Producer

THOMAS SCHLESINGER AND KEITH CUNNINGHAM - THE SCREENWRITER AS A STORYTELLER AND THE WRITERS JOURNEY

London May 22 and 23 and May 24 - 29 1993

The first seminar will introduce you to models which illuminate the depths of your story and techniques to stimulate your best work. This is not a formula approach but one which takes the writer's creative process and uniqueness into consideration.

THE WRITERS JOURNEY is the most intensive story training you can find. Based in part on Joseph Campbell's 'Hero's Journey' and Aristotle's plot curve, this interactive and multi-dimensional workshop will help you structure your stories effectively - and give you tools for a lifetime of productive creativity.

PAUL GRAY - SCRIPT REVISION: THE INSIDE STORY

London 4 - 5 June 1993

A new seminar by one of Hollywood's most respected creative script consultants in which he will share his experience and unique methodology in addressing one of one of the most serious problems all film-makers face: taking a problem script and making it come alive.

"Absolutely necessary for writers producers directors and project developers working with second drafts through pre-production and the shooting script"

ROBERT McKEE - STORY STRUCTURE AND STORY ANALYSIS

London 18 - 20 June and 26 - 27 June 1993

STORY STRUCTURE is a complete, comprehensive, well organised exploration of all elements of storytelling and their relationships. It is a practical course putting a new light and perspective on the craft of storytelling from basics through to advanced concepts and techniques.

"I found McKee's class fascinating, in fact I took it twice." JOHN CLEESE, Writer, Producer, Actor

STORY ANALYSIS - in which Robert McKee applies principles and concepts taught in his

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For registration and further information please contact International Forum (U.K. Office): The Oast House, Plaxtol, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 0QG Joan Harrison Tel: 0732 810925 Fax: 0732 810632 International Forum Head Office: 2 Via Nerola 00199 ROMA, ITALY